IUR

International UFO Reporter

Volume 31, Number 4

Betty Hill discusses the finer points of ufology with Eddie Bullard and Joe Firmage during a tour of the Hill encounter site.

THE HILL CASE

AND THE LIMITS OF UFOLOGY

Participants in the September 2000 conference at Indian Head Resort, New Hampshire, on the Betty and Barney Hill abduction case. Left to right: Marcello Truzzi, Peter Brookesmith, Greg Sandow, Dennis Stacy, Karl Pflock, Eddie Bullard, Robert Sheaffer, Hilary Evans. Photos by Mary Martinek.

INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER

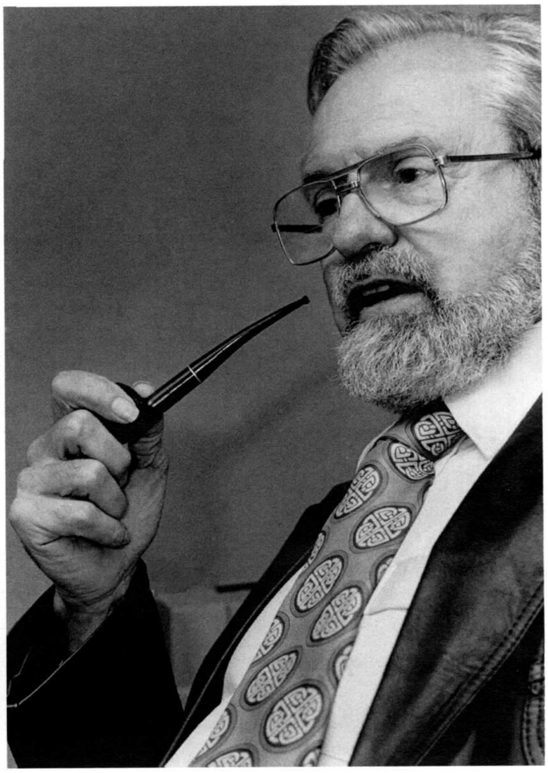
Editors:
Jerome Clark
George M. Eberhart
Mark Rodeghier

Contributing Editors:
Bill Chalker
Richard F. Haines
Kevin D. Randle
Jenny Randles
Chris Rutkowski

Web site:
www.cufos.org

E-mail:
Infocenter@cufos.org

Answering machine:
(773) 271-3611



J. Allen Hynek
1910-1986

The Hill case and the limits of ufology *by Greg Sandow* 3
UFOs or mystery airships? *by Jerome Clark* 8
Messing around with the force *by Michael D. Swords* 15
Letter 18

Published in March 2008.

International UFO Reporter (ISSN 0720-174X) is published quarterly by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Copyright © 2008 by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies. Third-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

Advertisements accepted for publication in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.

Address all article submissions, letters to the editor, and other editorial correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

Address all subscription correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

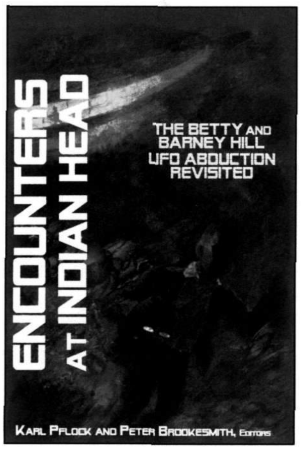
The *International UFO Reporter* is a benefit publication mailed to Associates of the Center for a contribution of $25.00 or more. Foreign Associates add $5.00 for delivery. All amounts in U.S. funds. Other publications also available for contributors of larger amounts. For details, write to the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659, USA.

Postmaster: Send Form 3579 to CUFOS, 2457 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

THE HILL CASE AND THE LIMITS OF UFOLOGY

BY GREG SANDOW

This essay wasn't meant to stand alone. I wrote it for a book called *Encounters at Indian Head: The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Abduction Revisited,* edited by Peter Brookesmith and the late Karl T. Pflock, and published in 2007. But then my contribution, along with one other, was left out for lack of space, and thus we're publishing it here.


ENCOUNTERS AT INDIAN HEAD
THE BETTY AND BARNEY HILL UFO ABDUCTION REVISITED
KARL PFLOCK AND PETER BROOKESMITH, EDITORS

Encounters at Indian Head was published in May 2007 by Anomalist Books, www.anomalistbooks.com. 312p. $17.95.

The book is terrific—a thorough and thoughtful addition to the long-standing Hill debate. Nine well-known writers on UFOs and anomalies (including Peter and Karl) wrote papers on the Hill case, and then, better still, seven of them got together to discuss and debate what they'd written. They could then revise their papers to include new ideas brought up in the debates, which gives the book extra strength.

The gathering took place, appropriately enough, in a New Hampshire resort in September 2000 near the place where the Hills had their experience. Joe Firmage paid for the conclave; as many readers might remember, he's an entrepreneur who back then was riding high on the Internet bubble and funded UFO research. My role was to observe and then chronicle the discussions, though I know I didn't quite do what Karl and Peter had in mind. They wanted me to write with the manic flair of Tom Wolfe, whom they'd hoped to snare for the job, but who turned them down ("in a typically unpredictable career move," as they wryly write in their introduction).

What Wolfe would have done with the event—whether he'd have found anything much more in it than eight guys talking—isn't for me to say. But deep in their hearts, Karl and Peter must have known that I write much better about ideas than about personalities. So what I produced was a critique of the New Hampshire discussions, a supportive one, I hope, but not without some criticism. I didn't reject anything the participants said, even when I disagreed with it, and I certainly didn't try to offer any solution of my own to the Hill case. But I did note what I thought were some limitations, both in the New Hampshire debates and in ufology at large. We don't have all the knowledge we need; we don't use all the analytical tools we ought to use. Or so I believe.

The New Hampshire cast of characters:

Karl Pflock, who died of Lou Gehrig's disease last year, worked in politics and government, and then became a ufologist, writing (among other things) two skeptical books about the Roswell crash. He was a Hill case believer.

Peter Brookesmith, a British polymath who raises horses in Shropshire, has written or cowritten four "largely skeptical" (as his biography in the Hill book says) books and articles about UFOs.

Dennis Stacy, a twangy Texan, edited the *MUFON UFO Journal* for many years and has written widely on UFOs. He now coedits and publishes *The Anomalist,* a lively annual journal about mysteries and odd phenomena.

The late **Marcello Truzzi,** moderator of the New Hampshire discussions and a professor of sociology at Eastern Michigan University, was widely published, both in his field and on the subject of anomalies, about which he was a skeptic but far from a dogmatic one.

Thomas E. Bullard, "Eddie" to his friends, is a folklorist who writes extensively about UFOs, and especially about abductions.

Hilary Evans of London has been writing for years about alleged encounters with otherworldly beings. He doesn't believe the stories are true in a literal sense, but thinks they're an important and powerful part of human experience.

Robert Sheaffer is a Silicon Valley data communications engineer and a widely published UFO skeptic.

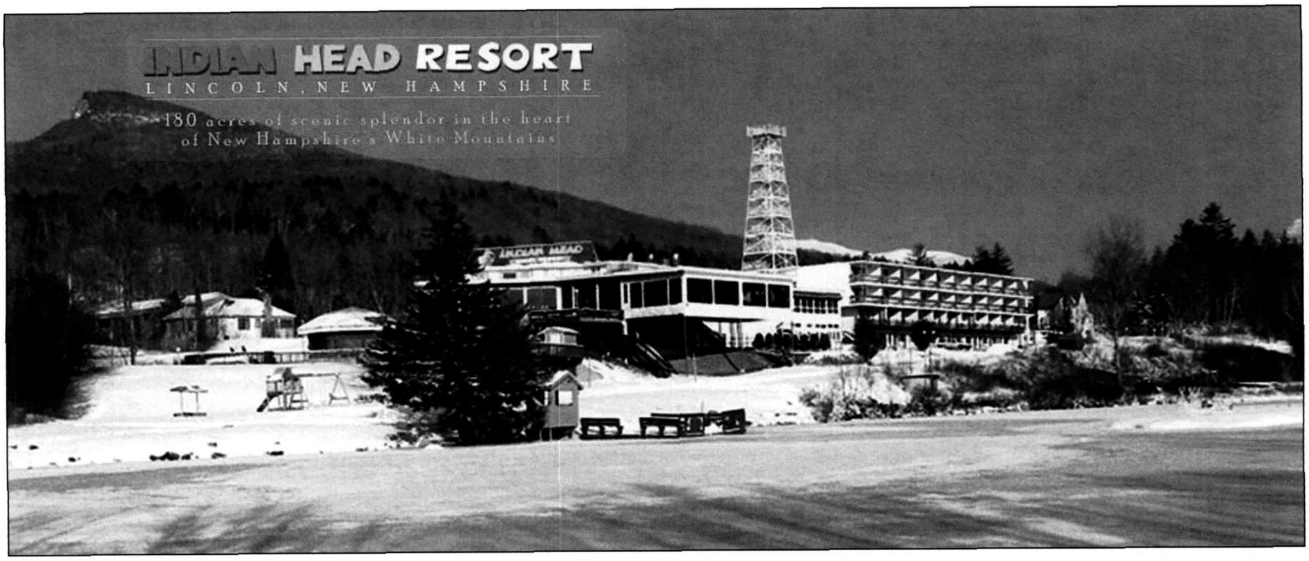
THE IMPRECISE SCIENCE

Ufology, to put it mildly, is an inexact science. For one thing, it's based on observation, not experiment—or worse, on observations reported anecdotally, which can't often be verified.

And then ufologists need more knowledge than you'd reasonably expect any one person to have. To give just one

---

Greg Sandow is a well-known classical-music critic and composer who writes about UFOs on occasion.


INDIAN HEAD RESORT
LINCOLN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
180 acres of scenic splendor in the heart of New Hampshire's White Mountains
INDIAN HEAD

example, ufologists trying to evaluate the MJ-12 papers—likely forgeries that pretended to be secret 1947 government documents on UFOs—needed to know all kinds of arcane things: how military bureaucrats wrote dates, for instance, on official documents in the 1940s (to check whether the date formats on the documents were plausible), and how photocopy machines subtly stretch or contract everything they reproduce (to determine whether an alleged Harry Truman signature was genuine or simply photocopied from another document). For the Hill inquiry, our needs were less obscure, but still we had to learn about a host of otherwise unrelated subjects, among them folklore; astronomy; the psychology of trauma, hypnosis, and dreams; and even the causes of warts, since Barney Hill developed warts in his groin after the alleged abduction. To do this right, we should have had a large team of consultants.

And we had one extra problem. The Hill trail is cold—the events happened long ago, and at the time we had our Hill discussions, two of the major figures in the case (Barney Hill and Dr. Benjamin Simon, the Hills' therapist) were dead. We couldn't get answers to all the questions we'd like to ask; often, there was no one we could ask. (And now, sadly, the trail is even colder, because Betty Hill, too, is no longer with us. She died in October 2004.) So we who gathered in New Hampshire were left with a conundrum we couldn't fully solve. We were thrown back on ourselves: on our fallible human qualities, our intuition, our leaps of faith, our guesses, and our preconceptions, grounding the entire stew in whatever knowledge we've picked up in the winding courses of our varied lives.

I might start, then, by asking who we were. Our arguments were friendlier than the usual ufological disputes, which in part might have been because we had no audience to egg us on. Our meetings weren't publicized, and so no one in ufology—a contentious cottage industry—knew that we were having them. None of our teammates—or our opponents—in the ufological wars would quiz or attack us when we got home and then denounce us on the Internet. We could relax and try, at least, to open our minds. Certainly the surroundings helped: mountains, trees, and a crisp, clear New Hampshire autumn, which we could hope might clarify our thinking.

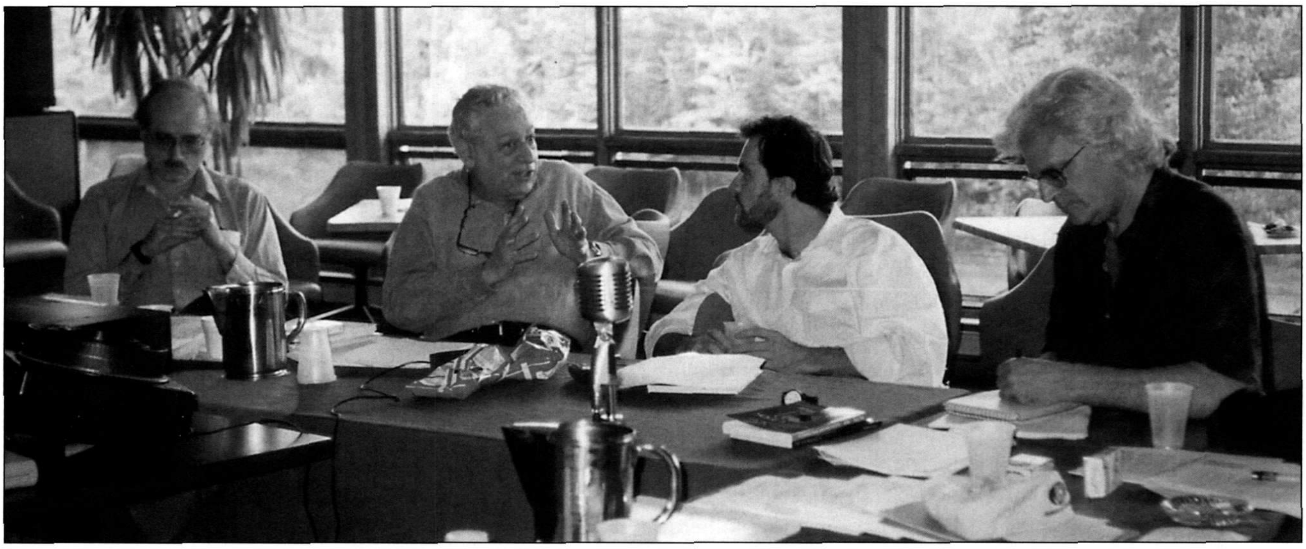
But who were we? Who gathered in New Hampshire to prod this mystery? Who sat around tables pushed together in a dining room at the Indian Head Resort, to sort out what we know and what we don't know—and to argue for the same positions that most of us (to be completely honest) had held for many years?

A CAST OF CHARACTERS

Hilary Evans was the one who looked like Merlin the Magician. Or at least I could imagine a compassionate Merlin who might resemble him—tall and gentle, with long white hair and a faraway look in his eyes. Did his detachment come from wisdom, or from modesty, or perhaps from unfamiliarity with some of what we talked about? I couldn't tell, though if he didn't always join in the discussion of things he didn't know, he might have been more wise and modest than the rest of us.

Peter Brookesmith, by contrast, has a visibly febrile mind. He's theatrical and mischievous, and with his goatee and dapper tailoring could have been the Devil, a characterization I rather think he'd like, though I'm sure he'd also like—and certainly deserves—credit for his brilliance, his wide reading, and not least for his courtesy. In the heat of debates on the Internet I've known him to be scathing, but in New Hampshire he was the very model of tact, restraint, and calm.

Robert Sheaffer, too, can be scathing because he's mercilessly skeptical of UFOs, and therefore cutting and derisive in his books and articles, casting himself as the proud voice of reason and scientific responsibility. Yet in person, with his ponytail and rumpled, slightly driven look, he looked like one of the Lone Gunmen, the hackers on The X-Files who, far from disbelieving in UFO conspiracies, eagerly probe



The author (right) takes notes during the meeting as Robert Sheaffer, Marcello Truzzi, and Joe Firmage discuss the case.

for their secrets. But then I'm forgetting that conservatives can sometimes look as wild as radicals and that Sheaffer's truest love might well be opera, which might reveal a streak of passion, even tenderness. He's a fine singer, a tenor who's worked professionally but has been bruised, I think, because his career hasn't taken off.

Dennis Stacy has a courtly Texan boyishness, and for those who know him, played a noble role with us. He, too, is a UFO veteran, who bears inside him many scars of battle and in recent years has gotten skeptical. I've seen him post blistering messages in Internet debate on UFOs, though they're funny, too, and lively, always written without a wasted word. Clearly he's impatient with what he thinks is nonsense (of which, by any measure, there's a lot in ufology). He also once propounded an explanation of abduction reports that's charged with high emotion. Since the aliens, he reasoned, are said to look like fetuses, abduction reports might be prompted by guilt about abortion. But with us he was sober and restrained. He'd been asked to write an impartial history of the case, and he did so with scrupulous care, giving full weight to evidence on both sides.

Eddie Bullard struck me as an enigma. He's tall, pale, and friendly, with a moustache that looks as if he's worn it in exactly the same way since the 1970s. He was the most precise of all of us, and probably (apart from Sheaffer's sure touch with astronomy, and Marcello Truzzi's with concepts and procedures) the most careful thinker. His expertise is folklore, which makes him one of the many experts that we'd need in our discussion. But his standing in the folklore field is hard to judge. He has a doctorate but doesn't hold an academic job (he works in the library at Indiana University), and though he draws on folklore studies in his writings, these writings are about ufology and appear in ufological publications. Thus—with no disrespect for his scholarship or expertise—it's hard to know, when he talks about folklore, how authoritative his views might be.

And what does Bullard think abductions are? That, too, is hard to judge. If you ask him, he calls himself agnostic—someone who hasn't decided whether abduction reports (or some of them, anyway) might be true. Yet his writings give more comfort to believers than to skeptics, and, privately at least, he must hold some opinion, some preference for one side or the other, some instinct that abductions are real or that they aren't. Probably (like most of us) he has some purely emotional leaning toward belief or skepticism. But he doesn't even give a hint of it.

The late Karl Pflock was a compact man, who struck me as soft-spoken but also clear and firm, and, to judge by his composure, calm, though maybe we could have gotten a second opinion on that from his elegant wife Mary Martinek, who handled some of our administrative affairs. Intellectually, Pflock—who had worked in Washington for the CIA and the Defense Department and as a Congressional aide—spoke like an apostle of moderation, definite about his own views, but willing to look at every side of every question.

Our moderator, the late Marcello Truzzi (he died of cancer shortly after our sessions, in February 2003), wasn't quite so calm. And in fact he often seemed impatient. His history is fascinating. He helped found CSICOP, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, now a fortress of hard-core skepticism with a shortened name, the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. But Truzzi thought skepticism means "to doubt," not "to deny," and he was quick to catch the flaws of skeptics' arguments, just as he was with believers' claims. That got him into trouble with his one-time colleagues, who squeezed him out.

That hurt, I think, but Truzzi seemed to feel that thinking well would be the best revenge, and so he was scrupulously fair. His impatience was for foolishness, and while I hope we weren't foolish, I suspect he thought we were—by his high standards—maybe just a little careless. In appearance, he was a rumpled academic, large and talkative. One specialty of his, both professionally and personally, was jokes; he had one for every occasion, and in gaps between occasions, too.

Which leaves three persons we didn't get to know as well. One was our funder, Joe Firmage, a commanding individual who didn't raise his voice but was plainly used to being heard. He was with us only for the first day of our sessions, which was a shame, because his views were to the left of ours (if the left wing, in these discussions, is belief, while the right wing is skepticism). He challenged us to lift our eyes from mere details and look at wider implications; I wish he'd done that more and that we'd paid more attention. Walt Webb and Martin Kottmeyer (who both contributed to the book) didn't join us at all, for which nobody could blame them, because both had conflicting personal engagements. But our debates were poorer for their absence. All of us who came to New Hampshire learned from one another; everything we wrote was stronger than it would have been without our conversations. I'd especially have liked to hear Kottmeyer hold forth. In his essay for the book, he's sharp and argumentative (and funny, too). Would he have shaken us? Would we have shaken him?

But there's one participant I haven't talked about—myself. Since I've described my colleagues, I thought it only fair to ask them about me. "No pack of cards is complete without a joker," Hilary Evans quipped by email. He went on to add that I was "an unpredictable element which has the power to throw the more conventional members of the pack off balance."

Truzzi guessed that I hadn't been asked to participate as much in our discussions as much as it turned out I did. And he was right, I fear: I'd been hired to write a chronicle, not to be part of what I wrote about. "But then," Truzzi added (and, though this again was email, I can almost hear his rueful laugh), "I was not expected to talk as much as I did (as supposed moderator)." Certainly he and I shared one trait: We're irrepressible.

Bullard emailed: "The panel members leaned forward like a circle of hawks, tethered by civility and the amicable mood of the conference but sharp with rationalistic, scientific points to dispute. Leaning back from the give-and-take over weather conditions and cultural influences sat Greg, the lanky, curly-haired dreamer, a humanist gathering the particles of argument into meaningful shapes. . . . And then he pulled off the mask and showed us those enormous wraparound eyes." (Just think what I could have revealed, if anyone had asked me!)

Evans flattered me with kind words about my "open-mindedness," so I'd better note that I came to Indian Head as the group's most radical believer. Karl Pflock thought the Hills really were abducted, but he didn't believe most other abduction reports. I, on the other hand, have been willing to accept the scenario Budd Hopkins and David M. Jacobs so famously advance, in which abductions are frequent, run in families, and are engineered to produce hybrids of the aliens and us.

Not, of course, that I think this scenario has been proven (or that we can even say for sure that aliens are here), but I do think there are data that—anecdotally, at least—support it. If I'm objective, it's because I respect a principle enunciated in this book by both Pflock and Truzzi: "The importance [to quote Truzzi's formulation] that we distinguish our beliefs (which usually rest on probabilities) from knowledge (which, as justified belief, results in certainties)." I try, in other words, to draw a line between things I really know and things I just believe; the reality of abductions goes in the second category. As far as I'm concerned, the most essential paper ever written on abductions is "The Abduction Experience: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Evidence" by Stuart Appelle, professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Brockport, published in the *Journal of UFO Studies* in 1996. A trenchant examination of the abduction evidence, it gives no comfort to skeptics or believers (Appelle, 1996). My essay "The Abduction Conundrum" (which Stacy commissioned for *The Anomalist*, a smart and literate journal that he edits with Patrick Huyghe) sets forth my own position (Sandow 1998). I mention this not to promote myself or my views, but so that readers who think I might be biased can see exactly what I do believe, and how I go about arguing for my beliefs. You can also find this essay online at www.gregsandow.com/ufo/Contents/Abduction_Conundrum/abduction_conundrum.htm.

BETTY HILL SPEAKS

But on to my chronicle. We first got together the night before our formal sessions started, to have drinks and dinner. This was a pleasure; we all knew about each other, but not all of us had met. I'd been reading Hilary for years, to give just one example; perhaps because he's British and lives far away from me, I'd never dreamed I'd meet him in the flesh. I'd debated Dennis sharply on the Internet, but when he came up to me, tall in cowboy boots and smiling, I knew the two of us would get along—and, extrapolating from that, that maybe all of us would, and that our discussions might be cordial, and even fun.

One guarantee of liveliness was Betty Hill, then 82 years old, who spoke to us at dinner. She was just five feet tall, but (as Stacy tells us in his Hill case summary) in the 1960s she wore four-inch heels. With us, she wore sensible flat shoes, but still she was peppery and full of flair.

She told us cheerfully (in the unabashed flat tones of her native New England) that on that faraway night of her alleged abduction, she'd rolled down the window of her car and shouted to the object in the sky, "Hey, boys, where are you from?"

Not that there's anything like that in her original accounts, but she moved right along, adding something she said she had told her beloved little dachshund as the object flew away: "Delsey! Look! You may be the only dog in the world who's ever seen this!" Some things, she granted, might have been unpleasant—"I felt contaminated," she said—but as she recalled it for us now, her encounter sounded almost like a visit to a carnival.

Her many later UFO sightings—which have never been substantiated and have a bad reputation with serious ufologists—sound mostly happy too, as she recounts them in her self-published book *A Common Sense Approach to UFOs*, though she did leave out a few details. She wrote, for instance, that scientists studied UFOs she saw, but we never find out who they were or what they learned (Hill, 1995).

When Hill left out those same details at our dinner, Truzzi, audibly skeptical, asked her if these scientists had ever published anything about her UFOs. But she breezed right past him. "We were looking for knowledge, not publicity," she said in a tone of utter confidence. "We shared our knowledge only with each other. We had a rule. 'Keep your mouth shut!'"

"You're an intelligent woman," Truzzi said, trying to be patient. "You know people make all kinds of claims." As indeed she did know; never one to jump on any bandwagons (or let just anybody jump on hers), she rather famously doubted that most self-proclaimed abductees have ever really been abducted. "Why," Truzzi asked her, "shouldn't people who are skeptical of those claims be skeptical of your claims?"

Hill all but shrugged. "Once," she said, "a science teacher [who'd been out watching UFOs with her] violated confidentiality." Evidently he'd told someone where the UFOs supposedly appeared because soon, said Hill, "We had 100 high school students out there, drinking and smoking pot." So one reason for confidentiality, as she told us, was that "we protected the area from being destroyed by the general public."

And that was all she'd say. Though Truzzi hadn't gotten anywhere, at least he tried. When Joe Firmage, acting as master of ceremonies, courteously stopped the questions ("We can continue this conversation," he said, "tomorrow when we tour the sighting area"), Hill just shut off her happy verbal torrent, saying, "Then we're over with? Thanks for hearing me out." People who tell the same stories many times settle into certain ways of telling them. Hill, I think, was no exception; I'd guess that parts of her account, as she presented them in our company, seemed true to her in part because she'd said it all so many times.

"He was worried about the UFO"

But here we had some help from Kathleen Marsden, Hill's niece, who also spoke at our dinner and brought us closer to what her aunt was like before she'd talked so widely about her UFO experiences. Marsden was a New Hampshire social worker (she's since retired) and seems sober and responsible. I'd guess she might provide some crucial personal support for Betty Hill. She's also interested in UFOs, for many years had been active in New Hampshire MUFON, and supports the core, at least, of Betty's story. (I asked her what she thought of Betty's later sightings, and she simply said—with both tact and common sense, I thought—that, in anything to do with UFOs, she always wants to see the evidence.)

She told us that her family took the UFO event quite seriously. Stacy, in his chronicle for the book, described some marks the Hills said they found on their car right after the event: "[T]he trunk lid," he wrote, "was randomly spotted with about a dozen small, polished circles the size of silver dollars." Marsden was still a child when all this happened, but she told us that she saw the marks herself, and her description matches Stacy's; she said the marks were "shiny circular spots." She and her brother tried to wipe them off, she said, but couldn't. When someone brought a compass near the marks, she said she watched it spin. Then, she told us, she watched somebody open up the trunk, without finding anything that could have caused the spin.

All of this sounded reasonable enough. Or at least it was reasonable if we accept the standard story of the Hill case. (Here, however, is a question: Why do I think Betty Hill exaggerated her later sightings, in part because she'd told the stories often, while Marsden's childhood memories—which she too may have recounted many times—seem much more grounded?) What many people might find harder to accept, though spoken just as soberly, was Marsden's support for some of the stranger things that Betty talked about only after Barney's death. The Hills, for instance, drove back to the White Mountains, to retrace their route. When they returned, supposedly they found withered leaves in the center of a table in their house, and among them were some earrings Betty said she lost the night of the abduction. If that (and other, even stranger tales) are true, the abduction, or at least its aftermath, starts to sound like some kind of magic.

But Marsden did substantiate one real-life consequence of the event. After the abduction, or so she said, Barney Hill felt unsafe at home. That's because the dead leaves and other spooky incidents made him worry that, as Marsden put it, "people seemed to be able to enter [the house] at will"—and that these were possibly "the people [he] encountered in the White Mountains." So he'd retreat, Marsden told us, to her family's 335-acre poultry farm and walk around it silently. When he'd visited earlier, he'd played games with all the kids ("he'd spin us around"). But now he'd changed, and Marsden said her parents warned her to leave him alone, explaining that "he needs to think."

Truzzi asked her whether Barney might simply have been worrying about his anxious wife. This was an important question, because skeptics have suggested that Betty, frightened and perhaps unstable, had dreamed the whole abduction tale. She then began to think her dreams were real, and spread her fantasy to Barney. So when Barney visited the farm, he might not yet have caught the abduction bug. Could he have paced around merely because he worried about Betty's fears? "No," said Marsden. "He told us he was worried about the UFO."

(continued on page 19)

UFOs OR MYSTERY AIRSHIPS?

BY JEROME CLARK

On December 6, 1887, the *Free Press* of Gouverneur, New York, carried this letter from a correspondent, identified only as G., from the nearby village of Fine:

> Perhaps I might interest some of your readers, if I should tell them of a strange phenomenon I saw at sunset Oct. 24th. I was sitting at a window, looking towards the east, watching the clouds as they rolled up from the west, giving us a clear sunset. At the south the forest sparkled and glistened, as if clad in what looked to me like sparkling silver. I began to look around for the cause; and coming from the north was—what? I can only describe it like this: About midnight between the heavens and earth, and coming at a rapid rate, was [sic] what looked like silver balls, reminding me of silver coin of all denominations, bright and sparkling, tumbling and rushing through the air going towards the east, and finally disappearing beyond the lower stratus of clouds. Two winds were prevailing at the time. The upper stratus of clouds going towards the east, the lower towards the west, and this bushel of sparkling balls, below the lower clouds, towards the east also. This grand phenomenon was visible about 4 minutes, and was seen by several persons here in town. Can any one tell me[,] from my discription [sic], what it was, and the cause of it? The day had been dark and gloomy.

Here is a compelling UFO sighting by an observant, intelligent witness—and in firsthand, not paraphrased, testimony. Nothing about it would be particularly remarkable if it had been reported in 1947 or after. Most likely, it would barely garner notice. What makes it significant is that it demonstrates, to all appearances, that the modern UFO phenomenon—the phenomenon of silvery structured objects shaped like spheres and discs—existed decades before Kenneth Arnold.

Or consider a sighting from Chippewa, Wisconsin, on an evening in early June 1898, when observers watched a strange object in the western sky, described by one witness as "having the appearance of an illuminated board, its dimensions being about 16 feet long by 9 inches broad, suspended in mid air." It cast a "lurid, glaring" light which made its presence impossible to overlook, according to the *Centralia* [Wisconsin] *Enterprise and Tribune*, June 11.

A few months later, at 9 o'clock on the night of October 3, persons in and around Garland, Texas, saw a "meteor" heading slowly in an easterly direction. It abruptly reversed that direction and moved on a vertical course before breaking into "three distinct bodies, each taking its own course. The first one was a bright red, the second a white light and the third a bright blue. The red and blue lights soon died out, but the white one continued on its way a few seconds, when its burst, emitting a shower of stars, which were extinguished almost immediately."

That same night, at the same time, just a few miles to the south, E. W. Campbell and his 12-year-old son George, riding along a rural road, were puzzled when everything became illuminated. The source was a big ball of fire descending from the sky. When it got to within three feet of the ground, it stopped and hovered for a period of time (unspecified), emitting a buzzing sound all the while. Approximately 10 feet in diameter, the object cast so intense a light as to hurt the eyes. It then shot off into the sky and was quickly lost to view.

Both of these reports were carried in a single article in the *Galveston Daily News*, October 6.

Investigating sightings of a "fire ghost"—a luminous aerial object seen in the countryside in the Geneva, Iowa, area—a wealthy farmer named L. H. Spangler loaded a shotgun on the evening of February 12, 1895, and rode his wagon out half a mile from his residence to the place where the phenomenon was being reported. The *Waterloo* [Iowa] *Daily Courier* of four days later gave this account:

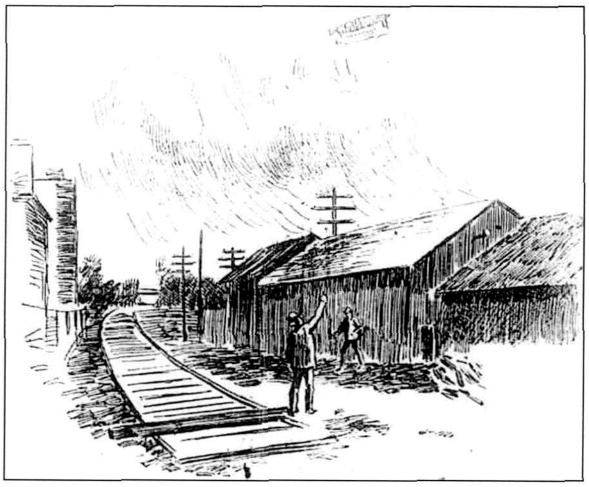
> Mr. Spangler saw a huge mass of fire about the size of a sugar barrel hanging in the atmosphere about twenty rods [330 feet] distant. The immense orb was slowly receding and Spangler whipped up his team until he was within three rods [approximately 50 feet] of the strange object. He then leveled his gun, took good aim and fired both barrels almost simultaneously. There was a loud report and the air was filled with millions of luminous glittering fragments which lighted up the country for miles around. . . . The fragments began to slowly come together and in a short time had again formed into one large body, which shot straight up into the air and disappeared behind a large black cloud. A long vivid

---

Jerome Clark, an IUR *editor, is the author of* The UFO Encyclopedia *(1990–1998),* Unnatural Phenomena *(2005), and other books.*

> streak of light was left across the sky which gradually faded away. After seeing the last strange phenomenon Mr. Spangler returned to his home, and the "fire ghost mystery" still remains unsolved.

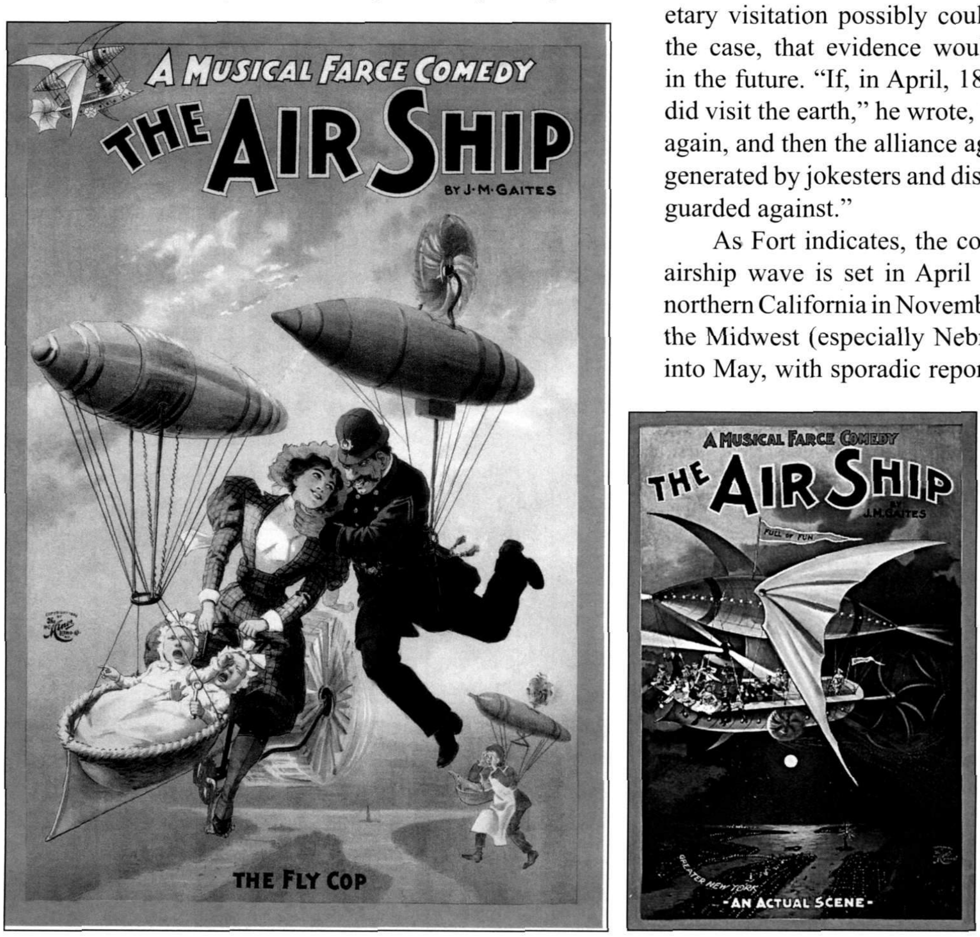
While definitely on the high-strangeness end of the scale, Spangler's encounter is a UFO sighting in the modern sense. So arguably is a March 14, 1906, incident—a close encounter of the second kind?—from Sodus, New York. At 8 o'clock that evening, according to the *Syracuse Herald* of the 16th, a "huge meteor" brilliantly illuminating the town and the heavens and making a frightening roaring noise sailed overhead. In its immediate wake "every electric light in the village suddenly ceased to burn. There was total darkness where the lights had been burning. This lasted for a few seconds, then the lights came on as before."


Drawing of airship allegedly seen over Rogers Park, Chicago, April 11, 1897, and photographed by Walter McCann, Chicago Times-Herald, April 12. However, the Boston Globe of April 15 claimed the photo was a model McCann hung from telegraph wires.

AIRSHIPS AS EXPERIENCE ANOMALIES

Ufologists have been aware of another category of aerial anomalies—mystery airships—since Charles Fort, who chronicled reports gleaned from period newspapers, from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in *New Lands* (1923) and *Lo!* (1931). Though frustrated by the many transparent pranks, hoaxes, and mistaken observations, he thought that beneath all the foolishness, arguable evidence of interplanetary visitation possibly could be discerned. If that were the case, that evidence would emerge less ambiguously in the future. "If, in April, 1897, extra-mundane voyagers did visit the earth," he wrote, "likely enough they will visit again, and then the alliance against the data [the confusion generated by jokesters and dismissive astronomers] may be guarded against."

As Fort indicates, the core of the American mystery-airship wave is set in April 1897. It began, however, in northern California in November 1896, spread eastward into the Midwest (especially Nebraska at first), and continued into May, with sporadic reports continuing throughout the year and beyond. In *The Flying Saucers Are Real* (1950), the first post-Arnold book to discuss the airship phenomenon in the context of the then-new UFOs (if not called by that name quite yet), Donald E. Keyhoe set down a sensationalized, seriously misleading account. Its effect, and surely its intention, was to blur differences between mystery airships and flying saucers. Thus, while the original press accounts clearly reported that the objects sported "large" and "magnificent" wings, Keyhoe wrote that such were "stubby" and "short" in the fashion of those recorded in



Artwork from a vaudeville stage comedy of 1898, "The Air Ship," by Joseph M. Gaites. The Fort Wayne (Ind.) Gazette of January 18, 1899, claimed: "One of the most realistic stage scenes ever presented will be the flight of a real air ship with fifteen passengers on a Klondike expedition, and a view of Dawson City in winter."

more recent years, and—not incidentally—more consonant with an extraterrestrial interpretation.

Since then, the mystery-airship question has generated several whole books (both commercially published and privately circulated), chapters in general works on UFOs, and numerous magazine articles, mostly—of course—in the ufological literature. A concentrated effort to unearth accounts from aged newspapers began in the mid-1960s, and even now researchers are finding previously unknown reports. Thomas E. Bullard's massive collection *The Airship File* (1982) is the essential document, but even it does not complete the recovery operation. Other stories have been found since then, and in recent months I have come upon yet others. Surely, hundreds more await the conscientious researcher.

The first thing that needs to be said is that, with exceedingly rare exception, we are dependent on press accounts for what we "know" of this episode. These accounts—I am referring here to in the American press—are frequently not credible. It took early researchers (prominently including me) awhile to figure out that in 1897 what passed for journalism would not begin to pass muster today. Some of what saw print was conscious fiction, somebody's idea of a joke, an editor's need to fill space. Other accounts, however, are apparently so accurate that the stimulus for the sighting, usually Venus, a meteor, or a kite, is identifiable simply from what we are told, even if the witness and the reporter represent it as an airship.

From these common realizations airship students begin to differ. Throwing up their hands, some have concluded that a great deal was being made of nothing, that the entire airship affair was newspaper hype and nothing more. However tempting, this is almost certainly not true, since airship sightings were confined neither to America nor to 1896–97; more sober newspaper accounts from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the British Isles from the mystery-airship era attest to sightings of phenomena strikingly comparable to those recounted in the more matter-of-fact American stories. *Something* was happening.

A literal, uncritical reading would lead one to believe that various secret inventors, apparently independently, had mastered powered flight and were soon to announce their marvelous constructions to the world and to the patent office. The early history of aviation is well known and firmly documented, and it does not include records of flights—and innumerable ones at that—over North America in 1897.[1] The names of alleged aeronauts cited in newspaper stories, recounting alleged encounters with the crews, do not match the names of real persons.

A few of the stories reflect a secondary current of speculation: that the pilots of the airships were Martians. (In those days, in the middle of the frenzy about alleged canals on the Red Planet, nearly all hypothetical extraterrestrials were presumed to be Martians.) Some of the tales have been conclusively exposed as hoaxes (e.g., Le Roy, Kansas; Aurora and Merkel, Texas; Linn Grove, Iowa), and others have the appearance of thinly veiled yarns. We cannot know for sure, but skepticism is warranted.

So if they weren't terrestrial aircraft or extraterrestrial spacecraft, what were the airships? John Keel and Jacques Vallee laid out interpretations which, while not exactly identical (Keel's leaning more toward the frankly demonological), drew on the explicitly supernatural, speculating that shape-shifting entities from other realities were posing as late 19th-century American aeronauts.

A more conservative interpretation, one I favored when I wrote the "Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century" entry for *The UFO Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (1998; I still think that whether it is right or wrong, it is at least generally defensible), holds that the mystery airships, more apparent than real, were like modern UFOs, except misinterpreted by witnesses viewing them through their particular cultural lens or carelessly reported in the press. Sightings were overwhelmingly nocturnal, and many were of lights which, it was presumed, were attached to dirigible-like structures whose shady shape witnesses may or may not have glimpsed. Some post-1947 reports describe generally dirigible-like forms (and for various reasons are not likely to be of *actual* dirigibles). Moreover, the rare surviving testimony of turn-of-the-last century witnesses—recovered, admittedly, decades after the fact—seems consistent with that analysis.

There is not, alas, much to go on. In my current thinking, I have come to suspect that while UFOs as we understand them were seen and reported a century and more ago, mystery airships may well represent what I have called in these pages "the secondary phenomenon"—an experience anomaly which unlike the "core phenomenon," an event phenomenon best exemplified in close encounters of the second kind, occurs in vivid perception and is preserved in memory and testimony, but effectively nowhere else. If there is an objective stimulus, it is unknowable; it is processed through consciousness and is experienced subjectively.

If I may quote myself: "Experience anomalies are open-ended. Almost anything can be 'seen,' though cultural traditions play a large, in some ways determining, role in shaping their particular content" (*IUR* 30, no. 4 [2006], p. 15). One might say that they function in a sort of parodic role, playing to expectations of the unknown or the otherworldly or, in this instance, the near future when powered flight would be common. Even a "real"—event—phenomenon recognized by science but otherwise clothed in mystery (ball lightning for a prominent example) is able to generate experiential correlates.

The notion of experience anomalies is descriptive, not explanatory. All it is intended to acknowledge what ought by now to be obvious but strangely isn't: that people in all times and places have had extraordinary encounters; that these experiences are vivid and convincing, available to more than one recipient, and with the resonance of reality; that they are not hallucinations in any ordinarily understood sense; that they are not the consequences of mental disorders; that they are not occurring in consensus reality; and that while their ultimate causes are unknown, the stimulus or stimuli are filtered through personal and cultural consciousness. Talk of "ultraterrestrials" or other speculative, unprovable interdimensional or otherwise paranormal entities is meaningless.

A LANDING IN TEXAS

I think the mystery airships of a century or more ago are probably a prime example of experience anomalies, there for the duration of a sighting, gone forever afterwards. I even have begun to reconsider at least a few of the landing and contact stories, which on their face appear neither more nor less credible than their UFO-era correlates, though from this distance it may be practically impossible to prove one thing or another. Nonetheless, one such story from Texas is surely intriguing.

Late on the evening of April 19, J. R. Ligon, agent for a Texas brewing company, and his son Charley, having just returned to their rural home near Beaumont, were unhitching the horses when they noticed lights in a nearby pasture. They walked the few hundred yards to the site, where they allegedly found "four men moving around a large dark object" which proved to be a landed airship estimated to be 180 feet long and 20 feet wide, with four large winds, two on either side; propellers were attached to the bow and stern. The aeronauts indicated that they needed water. Ligon is quoted in the *Houston Daily Post* (April 21) as saying, "They came to my house, each bringing two buckets." The only crew member to provide information, and then only when asked, identified himself as Wilson. He said he and his companions had flown their machine to the Gulf of Mexico and were returning it to Iowa, where they came from and where the craft had been constructed.

On April 25, the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* carried an interview with a man identified as Rabbi A. Levy, who was visiting the city to attend his niece's wedding. Levy, said to be a Beaumont resident, told the reporter that on a recent night, having heard of an airship landing on a farm two miles from town, he rushed to the site. In the darkness he glimpsed the outline of an airship—in his judgment something like 150 feet in length, with large wings. Levy said, "I spoke to one of the men when he went into the farmer's house, and shook hands with him. . . . Yes, he did say where it was built, but I can't remember the name of the place, or the name of the inventor. He said that they had been traveling a great deal.... I was so dumfounded that I could not frame an intelligent question to ask."

As veteran mystery-airship researchers can attest, it is often difficult, even impossible, to establish that the alleged witnesses to these sorts of fantastic claims were real people, much less that they were credible individuals. In this instance, I have not been able to document the name J. R. Ligon in late-19th-century Beaumont through online searches, but such searches do document that "Ligon"—not a common name—is long established in Beaumont and nearby communities. A Joseph Ligon lived in Beaumont during the period in question, but it is not clear if he and J. R. were one and the same. Federal census records for 1900 do not record a J. R. Ligon in Beaumont. Charles J. Ligon, born ca. 1875, is noted as living in Ellis, Texas, an apparently no-longer-extant community, though there is an Ellis County. Marine Corps Maj. Charles Ligon of Beaumont, obviously not the Charley in the story but perhaps a relative and namesake, was killed in Vietnam in 1967. At least one J. R. Ligon currently resides in Texas. I have written him but have not heard from him.

More certain is the presence of a Rabbi A. Levy in Beaumont in 1897. Beaumont historian and newspaper columnist W. T. Block has written of the city's small but thriving Jewish community, dating from the 1870s. In September 1895, Temple Emanuel was established, and its members "immediately engaged Dr. Aaron Levy as the city's first resident rabbi. . . . In 1901, Dr. Levy left for a new assignment." Block notes that during his stay in Beaumont, "Rabbi Levy, as the voice of the congregation, plunged headlong into community affairs. . . . In September, 1896, he won much acclaim from Christians for an eloquent address at the opera house, entitled 'The Jews Versus Christians.' He also contributed many newspaper articles and taught a school."

Though I do not have access to the Beaumont newspapers of the period, I have found some references to the rabbi, all flattering, in the *Galveston Daily News*, for example this: "Rabbi Levy has won many friends during his stay in Beaumont" (November 30, 1896). (Galveston is just to the south-southwest of Beaumont in the far east-central part of the state.) Interestingly, each press mention of him is consistent with the *Picayune*'s in identifying him as "Rabbi A. Levy."

In short, Levy does not look much like a hoaxer or prankster. And *if* the presence of J. R. Ligon in 1897 Beaumont eventually can be documented, we may have something like evidence—for the first time—that not every tale of an encounter with ostensibly human aeronauts is a fabrication. If this proves to be the case, I think our attention should turn next to another encounter claim that, along with the Ligon/Levy report, strikes me as the most worth pursuing.

A LANDING IN ARKANSAS

As reported in the *Helena Weekly World* on May 13, as well as other state newspapers, Constable John J. Sumpter Jr. and Deputy Sheriff John McLemore, working out of Hot Springs, Arkansas, were riding north of the city late on the evening of May 6, pursuing fugitives. They spotted a brilliant light moving through the sky but kept their silence, fearing that their voices could be overheard. The light vanished suddenly, and the two resumed their search for another four or five miles. Now the luminous object reappeared, descending behind a hill.

They rode another half mile before their horses refused to continue. As they stood there, Sumpter and McLemore noticed "two persons moving around with lights" about 100 yards ahead. They drew their rifles, dismounted, and challenged the strangers.

> A man with a long dark beard came forth with a lantern in his hand, and on being informed who we were proceeded to tell us that he and the others—a young man and a woman—were traveling through the country in an airship. We could plainly distinguish the outlines of the vessel, which was cigar-shaped and about sixty feet long, and looking just like the cuts that have appeared in the papers recently. It was dark and raining and the young man was filling a big sack with water about thirty yards away and the woman was particular to keep back in the dark. She was holding an umbrella over her head. The man with the whiskers invited us to take a ride, saying that he could take us where it was not raining. We told him we believed we preferred to get wet.

A short conversation ensued, during which the old man related that he and his associates were working their way to Nashville but would take their time so that they could tour the country. The officers, in a hurry to resume their search, left soon. When they returned to the scene empty-handed 40 minutes later, the airship was gone.

This, in any event, was the account they gave in a worn statement before Justice of the Peace C. G. Bush on May 8. The *Fort Smith Daily News Record* remarked that in the face of ridicule the officers "most seriously maintain that it is absolutely true, and their earnestness is puzzling many who . . . see that the men are not jesting." The *Arkansas Gazette* affirmed their "undoubted integrity."

Many comparable stories published in the 1897 press are not credible on textual evidence alone. Like the tall tales that would load the classic contactee literature more than half a century later, the aeronauts are quoted *verbatim* in lengthy discourse, as if the alleged witness were taking detailed notes (though such conscientious record-keeping is, of course, unmentioned) so as not to miss a word. The nonsensical content is a lesser consideration. Even apparently sincere claimants to extraordinary beings and entities describe exchanges that do not make a whole lot of sense; those claimants, however, don't profess to tell us the exact words. Only fiction writers and liars do that.

Sumpter and McLemore, who only paraphrased what the old man reportedly told them, did not provide suspiciously excessive detail. Clearly, as other Arkansas newspapers indicate, they were known to people who lived in their jurisdiction, so I am not particularly worried that at this point I have no independent verification of their existence. I have found, however, that C. G. Bush was a Clark County court officer during the period in question. Hot Springs is located in that county. In my opinion, the whole affair is genuinely puzzling.

After collecting airship reports and reflecting on them for decades, I have come to a radical but—I think—inescapable conclusion: Craft-like structures were being perceived in the sky and, more rarely, on the ground. They were not UFOs as we understand them, though—as shown in the opening paragraphs of this article—UFOs in our sense were being recorded at assorted times and places in 19th-century America. The mystery airships were a profoundly anomalous experience phenomenon, its content supplied by images from the percipients' culture, just as in traditional societies vivid experiences of supernatural entities (gods, fairies, monsters) take their shape from prevailing beliefs about otherworldly encounters.

It is likely, in other words, that if mystery airships are not poorly described UFOs, they are something almost infinitely stranger.[2]

APPENDIX: AIRSHIPS IN THE 1897 PRESS

In recent years I've collected a fair number of airship reports which either escaped or were unavailable to earlier researchers. Here I summarize representative examples in an effort to illustrate something of the character of the 1897 wave.

Albia, Iowa, April 2, 10 p.m. "The mysterious airship . . . came from the west, and then passed toward the north, moving in an erratic manner. It appeared as a brilliant reddish light, and was seen by many reliable people" (*Iowa State Reporter*, April 8).

Wilmington, North Carolina, April 5, evening. "Hundreds of people were out on the streets and wharves . . . looking at a brilliant floating mass in the heavens to the west of the city. It was moving very rapidly, and many persons saw the aerial wonder. . . . The ship moved to the west at a rapid rate. It seemed to have something like a searchlight, facing earthwards. . . . The ship appeared to come from the ocean. . . . Some gentlemen who saw the ship through field glasses inform us they could see wires and ropes of rigging about it. To the naked eye many colored lights were visible. Even those who looked at it without glasses admit of no doubt that it was an airship" (*Wilmington Messenger*, April 6).

Guthrie, Oklahoma, April 7, 11 p.m. "The attention of Landlord Trumbull of the Arlington hotel was attracted by a dark looking object moving through the air above the city.... Mr. Trumbull called a number of people, who watched the strange shadow object for a long time. . . . Its outlines were indistinct, but a light was thrown out from the front, and at times there were flashes of light along the sides. It moved swiftly backward and forward, sank almost to the ground just north of the city, and then rose straight into the air at great speed and disappeared" (*Galveston* [Tex.] *Daily News*, April 8).

Louisville, Kentucky, April 12, early morning. "Augustus Rodgers . . . claims it passed over Louisville last night. . . . Rodgers, who lives two miles south of the city, came out of his cabin an hour before daylight to attend to his stock. There immediately above him at a distance of 400 feet[,] according to his story, was a terrifying and yet a beautiful sight. A huge, oblong shape . . . apparently about 40 feet by 15 feet, brilliantly lighted, for it was yet dark, and flying through the air at a speed of 100 miles an hour, met his eyes . . . in the form rather of a barge than a ship, with massive proportions and solidarity. Rodgers called to his wife . . . and together they watched the strange sight as it disappeared to the southeast. Before it vanished uncouth and enormous shadows flickered from all parts of the ship, and both Rodgers and his wife saw a form, like that of a man, standing at the front of the ship and directing its course" (*Louisville Evening Post*, April 13).

Deadwood, South Dakota, April 12, late evening. "One young man . . . distinctly saw queer lights floating in the air above him and the dim outline of a mysterious something sailing over the city. It moved in a leisurely manner and was in sight sailing slowly for at least twenty minutes. The same thing was observed by four other gentlemen, and each gives a different account of its appearance. The gentlemen are personally unacquainted with one another" (*St. Paul* [Minn.] *Pioneer Press*, April 13).

Deadwood, April 15, evening. "C. A. Peckinpaugh . . . and a companion say they saw an air ship alight on Terry Peak. It is said that it was also seen by fifteen or twenty others, some of whom started up to investigate[,] but before they reached it, it rose and flew away. It was cigar-shaped with enormous wings" (*Sioux Falls* [S. Dak.] *Argus-Leader*, April 19).

Birmingham, Iowa, ca. April 16. "William H. Walters, living near this city, is responsible for the statement that he and several others saw an air ship settle down on a meadow a mile from this city. They ran toward it, but when they were within 100 yards it rose into the air. Two men could be seen in the car. The machine was about 100 feet long and 20 feet thick at the center, tapering to a point at each end. When it rose it made a whirring sound like that of a circular saw" (*Syracuse* [N.Y.] *Daily Standard*, April 17).

Derry, Pennsylvania, April 17, evening. "The air ship . . . passed here . . . according to many prominent persons, who claim to have sighted it. It is cigar-shaped and has red and green lights and a very small center light, white and very brilliant. The ship was headed east, traveling very rapidly and about 500 feet high. A car is hanging about ten feet from the airship entirely enclosed" (*Indiana* [Pa.] *Messenger*, April 21).

North Central Missouri, April 19, late evening. "Near midnight, F. R. Pryor, James Freels and Wm. Barnes saw the much talked of airship, near said F. R. Pryor's residence on Shoal Creek. The ship came from the direction of Chillicothe, and after alighting near Mr. Pryor's residence where it remained for a few minutes seemingly in the interest of generating electricity it again took flight, going in a northwest direction. . . . It was a monster; the sails or wings being spread as those of a South American Condor, and the head light as dazzling to the eyes as the rays of the noon day sun, while the green and red lights shown [sic] as the lights at a church festival. The ship seemed to move through the air with as much ease and rapidity as the fleet winged carrier pigeon" (*Hamilton* [Mo.] *Farmer's Advocate*, April 28).

Sabinal, Texas, April 20, 2 a.m. "The famous airship . . . was seen directly over this place . . . by Charles McClar, night operator of the Southern Pacific company. . . . He says that the ship was not more than 300 feet above the earth and traveling in a westerly direction . . . The bottom much resembles the keel of a steamboat. Its passage through the air was accompanied by a strange whirring sound, not unlike the buzzing of an electric battery" (*Galveston Daily News*, April 23).

Columbia Heights, Ohio, April 22, 9:20 a.m. "Mrs. Burkhart, who was hanging out clothes, was the first to discover the ship and she pointed it out to Mrs. Case. The son was called and the trio watched it until it disappeared from view. Mrs. Case . . . describes [it] as being shaped like a yacht. It carried a small sail and was propelled by a wheel, which Mrs. Case claims was similar to a windmill, which was attached to the rear. This glistened brightly in the sun light as the ship soared by. Bert Case thinks the ship was 1,500 or 2,000 feet from the earth" (*Massillon* [Ohio] *Independent*, April 22).

District of Columbia, April 23, morning. "The mysterious airship . . . came down the Potomac and gradually disappeared from view over the hills of Virginia, sailing southeast. It was plainly seen by the officers and soldiers at Fort Myer, by the attaches of the Analostan Boat Club and by hundreds of other reputable citizens who are willing to make oath that it was the genuine thing. To the naked eye it seemed like an oblong balloon floating upon its side, with a slight pitch in the direction in which it was going. Those who were fortunate enough to have glasses declare that it was a double-barreled arrangement, shaped like a catamaran [boat with two parallel hulls] hanging vertically, rocking from side to side, and often shifting its position as if it was drifting in the atmosphere. Sometimes one of the ends would be toward the observers and then they would see it full broadside. No smoke or smokestack or wings or other means of propulsion could be detected, nothing more than the two cylinder-like objects that were coupled to each other fore and aft" (*Salem* [Ohio] *Daily News*, April 24).

San Antonio, Texas, April 25, 12–1 a.m. "The airship . . . passed over San Antonio. . . . The course that the bright object took was from northwest almost due east and then south, passing over the city apparently about two miles east of the city hall. The sky was heavily clouded and not a star was visible. This brought out all the stronger the keen white light of the airship headlight, together with the shimmer that the strong illumination cast about it. It prevented, however, anything like a view of the structure itself, but as the strange object wheeled about and came nearer a dozen or more dim lights among them a cluster of green lights on the side of the ship toward the city, and another immense cluster of red lights at the stern, plainly indicated its artificial nature. . . . The maneuvering of the object in lowering and rising, as well as the arrangement and color of the lights[,] left no doubt but that the object was the airship which has been hovering over the central portion of Texas for the past several days. No stop was made, but an almost southeasterly course was pursued by the ship. The aerial visitor passed out of sight by degrees, the red stern lights growing dimmer and dimmer until they seemed to gradually dissolve into the blackness of the night" (*San Antonio Daily Express*, April 26).

Cincinnati, Ohio, May 8, 8 p.m. "What was supposed to be an air ship sped across this city from the southeast to the northwest at a great height and with incredible speed. It showed a brilliant light and some who saw it are unable to describe its form; others say it was cigar shaped. . . . Its speed was not less than 100 miles per hour" (*Fort Wayne* [Ind.] *Gazette*, May 9).

Whitemouth, Manitoba, July 29, evening. "The large balloon . . . was seen passing in a northeasterly direction . . . three miles from Whitemouth. . . . The evening was calm and clear. [The witness] was standing in the door of his barn . . . when he saw a large oblong object sailing slowly across the horizon. Gradually he made out the car when he saw a large sail swing into view. . . . The balloon was floating very low and . . . could not have been more than half a mile away" (*Syracuse* [N.Y.] *Evening Herald*, August 2).

Central Minnesota, December 19, 5–8 a.m. "An object high in the air and traveling north was seen . . . and the unanimous opinion was that it was a successful aerial navigator. So far as known, the balloon or airship was first seen by Engineer Hussey, of the Great Northern night express, running from St. Paul to Duluth. He says that about five o'clock the object passed over the train, going almost due north. J. S. Campbell, agent at Motley, Minn., for the Northern Pacific, and Night Operator Harris and many of the villagers saw the airship and say it was in sight for more than an hour. Night Operator Mason, at Deerwood, also saw the aerial navigator. Operator Campbell says the airship was balloon-shaped and looked about as large as the full moon. A single green light was visible" (*Dubuque* [Iowa] *Herald*, December 19).

Some of the most outlandish newspaper stories played to the speculation that visitors from another planet were piloting the airships. The most notorious of these, era press attention to which consists entirely of a single brief notice in the *Dallas Morning News* for April 19, recounted the crash of an airship with a windmill in tiny Aurora, Texas, and the death and hasty burial of its Martian occupant. Though repeatedly exposed as a joke ("hoax" may be elevating the inventor's intention), it impressed naïve observers when the original story was rediscovered in the 1960s. To this day, there are those who believe an alien is buried in Aurora's cemetery, much to the irritation of the town's residents.

To the best of my knowledge, the following story, related in one long paragraph in a column otherwise devoted to mundane local news, has not appeared in print since it first saw light in a Wisconsin paper, the *Eau Claire Leader*, for April 17. It is, of course, exceedingly unlikely to be true in any sense, but here it is both for the record and for its curious details:

> The airship was sighted on Thursday night [April 15] by Albert Crawford, John Powers, John Crawford, Elder Stanton and his son. The ship came along with great speed, showing a red, green and white light. The ship touched ground near Marsh's farm and a curious looking man in a fur coat, after fastening the wonderful apparatus to a stump[,] walked across to Melvin Bannister's house and rapped at the door. Bannister's dogs set up a fearful barking but the visitor pulled a strange kind of a lantern out of his pocket which had the effect of sending the curs a-howling with their tails between their legs. The airship man talked a very queer language and the noise was so peculiar that it left Mr. Bannister to believe he was a being from another world. The strange visitor made signs he wanted a hammer and some shingle nails which Mr. B. soon provided him with. Also filled a can for him with skim milk. Melvin made signs he would go with the stranger to help to mend the ship, but the man shook his head and looked terrible things so Mr. B. forebore. After the mending was all done, the strange man handed back the tools to Mr. B., waved his hand to him very politely, tossed him a coin and mounted with his ship over the trees. Mr. B. says the thing made a fearful whizzy noise as it shot upwards, but after awhile [sic] it sailed away in great style. Mr. B. describes it as a long cigar shaped device with wings and fans and fixings attached. The Crawfords, Stantons and [word missing; others?] came up just as the ship set sail, but they got a good look at it. They also carefully examined the coin left by the heavenly visitor. It was unlike anything they ever saw before. A beautiful metal of a very strange color and much heavier than gold. They are all of the same opinion as Mr. Bannister that the airship and the man came from another world.

The notion of an otherworldly visitor who leaves a miraculous artifact (sometimes a coin) as lasting proof of its passing presence is an old folklore motif. More creative, perhaps, is the reference to the visitor as clad in a fur coat, a detail that would be revived in the May 1909 testimony of one C. Lethbridge, who claimed (according to the *London Daily Mail*, May 20) that while driving a wagon along a mountain road in Wales he spotted a landed cylindrical craft, next to which stood two "young men . . . officers" wearing fur coats. They were conversing in a language Lethbridge did not understand, but when they saw him, they ran into the ship and flew away. Here, however, no otherworldly associations are advanced; we are to believe that the aeronauts were German spies, which we know now they could not have been. For cogent reasons, the tale is usually thought to be a hoax. In *Lo!* Fort, who thought so too, at least brought the claim into an extraterrestrial context, if only to dismiss it: "Anybody else [who] wants to think that these foreigners were explorers from Mars or the moon" was welcome to do so, he remarked, but he would not be among them.

(continued on page 29)

MESSING AROUND WITH THE FORCE

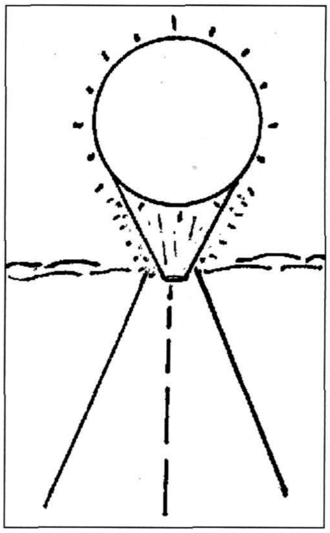
BY MICHAEL D. SWORDS

Some people say that the UFO phenomenon isn't physical. For that sort of person, UFOs will remain so (regardless of contrary argument) until they are run over by one . . . or, a little more likely, their car is conked out and their skin heated up by that nonphysical UFO. For those of us who are a bit more open-minded, the hundreds of cases which involve automobile malfunction and/or "sunburn" are plenty good enough to impress. Let's look at how the phenomenon expressed itself in a variety of these events and how the witnesses reacted to their experience. Maybe this will lead us to a thought or two (never a conclusion, alas) about this mysterious subject. As usual in my articles, the choice of cases is idiosyncratic, but I think you'll like them.

The classic auto-stop case is Levelland, Texas. The classic auto-stop-plus-sunburn case is Levelland's time-twinned buddy, the James Stokes experience. Both occurred in 1957, which was a good year for this sort of thing. But you probably know all about Levelland and Stokes already, and Allen Hynek got Steven Spielberg to put a Stokes-like episode into *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, so let's give some other cases their 45 seconds of fame.

A poor year for UFOs would seem to be 1969, with the Curse of Condon raining on the ET parade. Or, was it really?

March 4, 1969. Atlanta, Missouri. About sunrise. William Overstreet, 50 years old, was driving in a rural area on his way to work when he saw a bright reddish-orange light. As he drew nearer to the light, he realized it was a huge (estimated 100 feet in diameter) ball, which was floating along at about 40 mph and following the contours of the land. As it began to cross the highway, it stopped and then began to follow the road. Overstreet approached in his truck, and the ball beamed a "strong white light" onto the road from its height of about 50 feet. The light beam was cone-shaped, ending at the road surface in an 8-foot diameter spot. Heat radiating from the beam had a similar effect on Overstreet of sitting in a closed car on a hot sunny summer day. When the beam came on, the object changed from red to a blue sphere surrounded by a red ring, which surrounded a whirling yellow.



Overstreet, a postman, was obviously not going to let wind nor rain nor sleet nor weird balls of light deter him from his appointed rounds, and he attempted to drive through the light beam. When he got to within six feet, both his motor and radio died. The ball and its beam moved a little further down the road, and the engine and radio were active again. He tried again to approach the beam, and the failures occurred just as before.

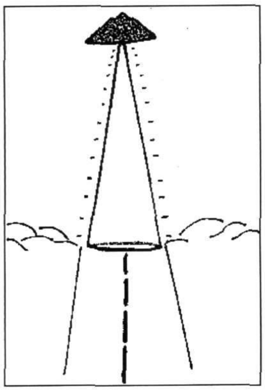
This time he let the beam mosey a bit further down the road and followed discreetly. The ball got about a mile away, turned back to red, switched off its beam, and then left the road. As it crossed the nearby power lines, it flashed and then cruised away until lost to sight. Then it was just another clear sunny morning in northern Missouri. The effect on Overstreet? "I had never believed in them too much until I saw this. Now I know that there is something to these UFOs. I don't know why it was there or where it was going. Neither do I know what it was after I saw it, but I don't care about being that close to another one."

Missouri is the Show Me state. I guess this UFO took that slogan seriously.

March 10, 1969. Near Glenwood, Missouri. About 11:00 a.m. A young housewife was driving (with her faithful canine companion in the back seat) between Glenwood and Lancaster. Her dog became agitated, and then she saw a bright blue-white beam of light illuminating the highway ahead. Looking for the source, she saw a dark gray, sort of pyramidal, domed disk, which she guessed could be 1,000 feet in the air and appeared larger than a dime in apparent size at arm's length. Her dog leapt into the front seat, acted very agitated, and tried to hide under the seat. As this dog was a St. Bernard, it must have been quite a scene.

"The dog started acting real strange. He started to bark

Michael D. Swords is professor emeritus of the Environmental Institute, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.



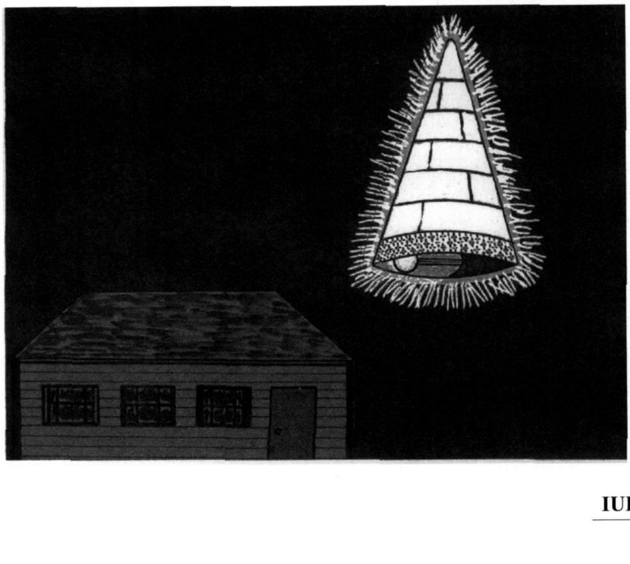
and jumped up on the front seat and was real upset. The hair stood up on the back of his neck. He all of a sudden acted as though someone had whipped him. He tried to get down under the seat. He was whimpering and was just real scared."

Well, our courageous lady was just the opposite. She (like our postal worker) attempted to drive right through the beam. It was so bright (like "looking directly into the Sun") that she had to shield her eyes. It seemed to begin on the bottom of the disk and then (the opposite of Overstreet's beam) coned outwards until it nearly covered the road. As her car entered the beam, it slowed, dropping from 50 mph to about 8 mph. "It [the car] did not start to miss. It merely slowed to that speed although I had the footfeed on the floor."

She crawled through the beam to the other side, and her auto picked up speed and functioned normally, as she drove away without looking back. The effect of all this on the lady? She was calm and curious throughout the sighting, but her eyes hurt her for three days afterwards. She got called by several UFO crackpots who asked her for money. But the dog got better, I am happy to report.

January 25, 1969. Plattville, Illinois. After midnight. A young married couple was driving home, the wife at the wheel, and the husband asleep in the passenger seat. She saw a very bright light low in the sky ahead. It resolved itself into an ice cream cone–shaped thing, on its side, traveling big end first. Their paths converged in the vicinity of the farmhouse owned by the landlord of the couple, which was nearly to their own residence. At a distance of a quarter mile, the cone stopped and righted itself (point up and only about 30 feet off the ground). Although not noticed at the time, the farmhouse's outdoor security lights had apparently gone out during this period.

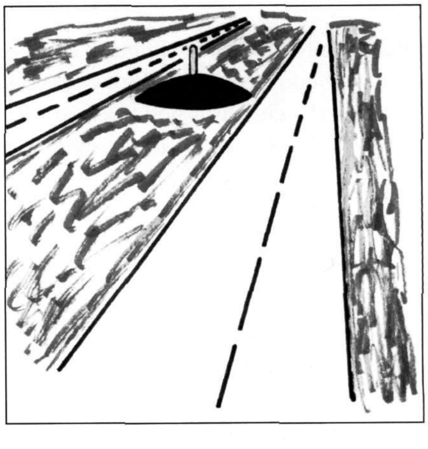
Approaching closer, the object seemed two or three stories tall and composed of strips like house panel siding. Below was a strip of brilliant diamond- and ruby-like lights—and the whole affair shone brightly. The object spun and flashed, and the car engine and lights went out.



The car, an all-electric Chrysler Imperial, was now helpless, and the wife was becoming alarmed. Now, the unthinkable happened. The front end of the Imperial was pulled three feet off the ground. As she later said, "I thought: It's going to pull us up inside it!"

No one can fault her for screaming at her snoozing husband, and frantically trying to restart the car. But it wouldn't start. Fortunately for ufology, her husband "restarted," woke up, and gave us a second witness. He was no more effective (and probably no less frantic), but at least they had each other. The object, though, was finished with its game, and the car smoothly sunk and then dropped the final foot and bumped into the ground. Once the ice cream cone UFO had departed, the car could be restarted. And the security lights came on, too.

January 1958. Near Niagara Falls, New York. 1:30 a.m. Snow was all over the place, and driving was tough on the New York State Thruway. A woman was trying to see her son who was in the army, and she was battling the weather to get there. She was going slowly when she noticed a large, dark shape and an illuminated 50-foot pole in the center parkway ahead. The pole seemed to be retracting and getting shorter. As she closed on it, her motor slowed down and then stopped completely. Her headlights also went out.



She began, out of curiosity, to get out, but thought better of it when she saw shadowy things, difficult to see but like some weird forms of "animals," suspended and moving about the illuminated rod. These disappeared, and the saucer-shaped object rose, spun, raced only 10 feet above the ground, and then elevated away. Her lights blinked on. She restarted her car and pulled up and parked as close to the landing spot as she could. She got out (isn't it marvelous how amazingly brave all these folks have been?), took her flashlight, and walked to the position of the disk, which was easy to find as the snow was melted there. An area of snow a foot in diameter had melted nearly dry with the grass showing.

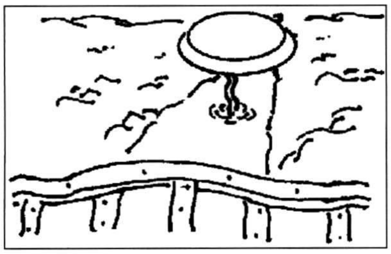
Later, she told her son about the experience. He advised: "don't talk about it." She concurred and said, "I don't want people calling me." But otherwise, she was curious and okay with the whole thing.

August 1959. Skiatook, Oklahoma. 2 p.m. on a hot day. The temperature was about 104 degrees, and even the

UFO needed a drink. A son was driving his father between Tulsa and Hominy, Oklahoma. Upon nearing a bridge their car's engine died. Across the bridge, another car was stopped and had its hood up. The son and father looked out from the bridge and along the creek.

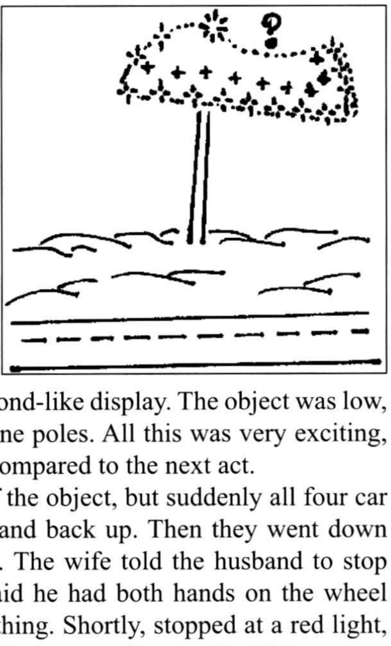
"My God, what in the world is that thing down there over the water?"

There was a metallic, domed disk with a flexible, metal-looking hose extending into the creek. It was right above the creek's surface, hovering less than a foot above the water. For five minutes the two watched the object from their immobile car. Then the hose drew in. The disk rose to 10 feet, disturbing the water surface greatly. It moved slowly and soundlessly as the water surface distorted to a foot-deep trench. Then it went up again and flew away. Both cars could then be started. The witnesses reported nervous fascination during the incident.



April 12, 1979. Brockton, Massachusetts. Early evening. This, folks, is a Massachusetts case from the 1970s. What that means is that someone in the UFO fieldwork community did some serious work on it. If all of us, all the time, had been like Massachusetts in its heyday, we'd know a lot more about UFO case details (and their credibility) than we do now. So I bow a bit towards the East.

A husband and wife and their two young kids were driving home from the grocery store. They saw an oddly shaped, lighted object. Part of it seemed triangular or cone-like, but another portion was apparently rounded, making it like a "lamb chop" or the top of a baby grand piano. There were lights all over it, confusing the shape further. (The investigating team checked the area's advertising planes thoroughly and found that none were up at that time.) There was only one spotlight beaming down, one red light on top, and numerous others forming a diamond-like display. The object was low, just above the telephone poles. All this was very exciting, but that was nothing compared to the next act.



They lost sight of the object, but suddenly all four car windows went down and back up. Then they went down halfway, and back up. The wife told the husband to stop fooling around. He said he had both hands on the wheel and wasn't doing anything. Shortly, stopped at a red light, the windows went back down and up again. Things were getting scary.

Driving again, they spotted the object, which seemed to follow them. The husband parked the car near their residence as the object hovered across the street. He shut off the engine and pulled out the key. Then the windows went down and up again, and the object moved over their car. The wife finally cracked at this, shouted at her husband not to get out of the car, and buried her head in her lap.

Her brave knight was also very scared, but consciously wanted to put on a resolute face for her and his children, so got out anyway. Their five-year-old son, being a five-year-old, jumped out right beside Dad. He stared up at the object while Dad pretended to casually unload the groceries. (Mom, no doubt, assessed both of them as poisoned by testosterone-excess insanity). Dad looked up and a beam came down immediately upon his head, and then shifted momentarily to his son. One can imagine what Mom thought of that!

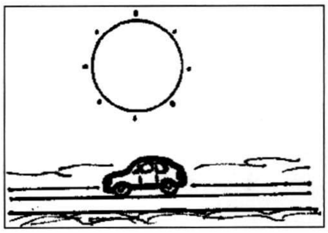
Dad later said, when the "beam hit me, I was scared stiff." No lie. Mom later said, "I try to forget about it."

The object then moved on down the street, up and away. There was no heat from the beam at all, so presumably the ice cream from the store made it to the freezer without ill effect. And, with the exception of casting doubt upon the husband's good sense, apparently the family was perfectly OK, as well.

September 24, 1966. Peoria, Illinois. 3:30 a.m. A young man, Mr. Gaines, was driving his girlfriend home when they spotted a large, luminous, blue sphere hovering relatively low in the sky. He tried to get closer to it, but it shot away. So he drove his girlfriend to her home and went on his way. But the big blue ball wasn't done with him.

On this way home, the object, now a bit smaller in apparent size, came and hovered over his car. He felt that it took over the controls. "My car began to pick up speed . . . the brakes wouldn't work . . . and the doors wouldn't open."

Nothing he did affected the speed or direction of his automobile as it raced along for several blocks. The object then left, having shown Gaines who was who, and his car was then back under his control. He went directly to the police and reported the incident, and they interviewed his girlfriend as well. "Officials" suggested that it might have been a weather balloon. (Lord! Doesn't it finally make you want to throw up, preferably on the lap of the infamous Gen. Roger Ramey?) The effect on Mr. Gaines? "It kind of shakes you up."



October 26, 1966. Takoma Park, Maryland. Almost midnight. A man had just finished early (way too early) seasonal Christmas decorations for his business, when a UFO decided to give him a little Christmas show of its own.

He was driving in a rural wooded area and came across an object that looked as if it might land in a nearby clearing. It was a 30-foot diameter disk, which put on a flashy red

(continued on page 29)

LETTER

ANSWERS ON BIG SUR

To the editor:

First, for the record, my undergraduate degree is in photography (Ohio University, 1972) and I was employed as a photographic technician for eight years (Northern Illinois University 1973-81). Consequently, I have more than a casual familiarity with the photography-related issues raised by Mr. Herb in his letter (*IUR* Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 21–22) regarding my article ("A Shot Across the Bow: Another Look at the Big Sur Incident," Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 3–11, 20–24). I have also been an amateur astronomer since 1966, although I have never engaged in astrophotography. Nevertheless, I am familiar with the type of optical distortions Herb describes.

Regarding the alleged incident, if the unknown object did indeed orbit the dummy warhead, as both Mansmann and Jacobs maintain, and if its presumed metallic surface did reflect sunlight, one would expect the appearance of that reflection, or glare, to have varied as a function of the object's movement. In other words, the reflection on the surface of the craft, whether specular or diffuse, would have changed—and perhaps become intermittent—as the object's orientation to the sun changed during the described orbiting maneuver. Therefore, if the optical illusion proposed by Herb actually existed, having the form of a dome or bubble, it would have varied significantly in appearance from frame-to-frame in the film.

It seems to me that such a variation would almost certainly have been noticed during the optical analysis conducted by Major Mansmann. At the time of the Big Sur incident, he possessed extensive photointerpretation experience and would have been familiar with fairly commonplace distortions caused by light reflection, as well as other optical illusions, and would not have mistaken them for physical objects. By his own account, Mansmann carefully scrutinized each image of the UFO with a magnifier. Despite this, he failed to mention any significant variation in the dome's appearance—at least in his letters on the subject—as the object maneuvered. In my view, this suggests that the reported dome was in fact a structural component of the unknown craft, rather than an illusion. (Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that the UFO was self-illuminated, in which case the solar-reflection illusion argument would again be rendered moot.)

Regarding the object's orbiting of the warhead, remember that its actual flight path would have been a spiral, or corkscrew, given the warhead's forward movement—at several miles per second—during the entire encounter.

Nevertheless, Herb's central point is correct: The only way a small object can circle another small object in space (where the objects' gravitational interaction is negligible) is by "the continuous application of carefully directed power." Therefore, if Mansmann and Jacobs have been truthful, as I believe, then someone or something operating a vastly superior spacecraft, performed a truly stunning feat. Indeed, if accurately reported, that performance remains—even to this day—beyond the realm of human achievement.

Regarding the warhead's tumbling motion, which reportedly occurred immediately after the UFO directed four beams of light at it, I can only guess to what extent such motion contributed to the warhead's premature splashdown.

To more adequately address the issue, I sent Herb's letter to a friend who possesses extensive knowledge relating to spaceflight. He responded, "Herb is only partly correct about the parabolic trajectory. The trajectory is only parabolic after the warhead separates from the booster in near space, and before atmospheric drag becomes significant during reentry. The boost phase of the flight starts out nearly vertical, but ends with a considerable horizontal component. Aerodynamic drag during reentry is substantial, therefore, it is not at all surprising that a tumbling object would have a shortfall of hundreds of miles. . . . If the object was made to tumble, I suspect this is all that would be required to explain the warhead's shortfall. Maybe there were 'mysterious forces,' but I don't see any need to invoke them. However, the force that caused the object to tumble might have also altered the trajectory. If the beam was like a laser or particle stream then the disturbing force might have been the mechanical reaction to vaporization or spallation of portions of the warhead. This has been proposed as a way of altering the course of dangerous asteroids."

Finally, Herb asks whether the application of physics and mathematics provides answers to some of these questions? Certainly—up to a point. Because the film is unavailable for study, we are attempting to quantify certain elements in two witnesses' highly descriptive but nonmathematical narratives. Therefore, unfortunately, the data gaps and variables involved may not permit reliable solutions.

Just as the apparent circular motion of the UFO, from the camera's point of view, was actually a spiral flight path, the exact orientation of the beams of light, relative to the warhead, will probably remain unknown. From the camera's point of view, the UFO appeared to be on or close to the same plane as the warhead during the incident. In reality, it may have been well ahead of, or well behind it—that is, further away or closer to the camera. As Mansmann once commented, "Telescopic photography of that magnitude makes sizes indeterminable. We knew the missile size but could not compare [that with the UFO] since we did not know how far from the missile the 'object' was at time of beam release." The same principle precludes our knowing the exact direction of applied force associated with each beam of light.

Robert Hastings
Albuquerque, New Mexico

✦

THE HILL CASE—*continued from page 7*

THE LARGER OCEAN

Then Firmage tried to take us to the stars. Or, with a little less drama, I could simply say he gave the last talk of the evening, but certainly he tried to raise the stakes of the discussion. He told us that he'd been involved with UFOs for quite a while. But not until this project had he entered the discussion of abductions—"a very real phenomenon," he said, without explaining what he thought the reality might be. Maybe he meant that abductions might be genuinely alien; he mentioned conversations he said he'd had with physicists, about developments that might explain UFO propulsion, and thus make abductions plausible. He also said we've reached the stage in our development when we're looking upward from our earth. We're like "fish on one beautiful coral reef," he said, "turning their backs on the reef and discovering there's an ocean out there."

That touched me, though I'll grant that it's a bit of a cliché. Still, ufology deals with a gigantic question—alien visits—which, if they are real, will plunge us into a far bigger cosmos than the one we've known. And it's striking that people in ufology rarely seem to be awed. Not the skeptics, by the magnitude of what they doubt, and not even the believers, by the vastness of what they believe. I never asked the others in New Hampshire what they thought of Firmage, and maybe that's because there's an unwritten rule among serious ufologists, that only credulous people talk the way Firmage did.

Which is our loss, I think. How many of us think UFOs are alien because that's what we want to believe or turn skeptical because we're afraid to believe it?

The next morning we took a small step into Firmage's larger ocean. Or at least we left the resort, to visit the locations of the sighting and alleged abduction.

I rode to the abduction site with Stacy, Pflock, and Betty Hill. Again she told us how she'd shouted greetings to the ufonauts. "I'm not a shrinking violet," she explained, as if we didn't know that. She said she wasn't even frightened when the beings appeared. "They were my size," she said, with perfect confidence. "If they'd been bigger, I might have been threatened."

How, one of us asked her, do we know where the abduction site was? How did she and Barney locate it? Well, she answered, some time after the event she and he were driving with her parents, looking for a place to camp, when suddenly they recognized the site. "Barney jumped out of the car," Betty said, "and ran right to a path in the woods."

But here we have a problem. Betty, as it happens, also told us that Dr. Simon, the hypnotherapist with whom she and Barney worked, led Barney to believe that he'd find the site. Or, to quote Betty's exact words, Dr. Simon "gave Barney the post-hypnotic suggestion that he wouldn't look for the spot, but would find it." Since people are susceptible under hypnosis, as we all know, Simon's suggestion might have functioned as a command: "You will find a place that you're convinced must be the site, whether or not you truly recognize it." If the abduction wasn't real, Barney could have chosen any spot that felt right, with the same emotion he'd have shown if the abduction really had been genuine. And even if the abduction did take place, Dr. Simon might have triggered unreliable recall. Barney might have chosen almost any site, just to give the doctor what he wanted. Which doesn't mean his recognition couldn't have been real. But we'd be justified in doubting it—unless, perhaps, Betty recognized the site as well.

I tried to probe that. "Did you both recognize the site at the same moment?" I asked. "Or did Barney say something first?"

"He might have said 'Wow!'" Betty answered, but her recollection wasn't clear.

Stacy had better luck when he asked her if the headlights in their car went out when the UFO got close. (In other cases, as all ufologists know, UFOs reportedly have stopped cars, somehow shutting down their engines, radios, and lights.) When she heard the question, Betty seemed surprised, as if nobody had ever asked her this before. She paused, and then, without much fuss, said, "Well, [the headlights] were out when we got back." Which of course is inconclusive, but at least she truly seemed to search her memory, as if she might have been uncovering something she'd never thought about before.

PROSAIC OR EXTRAORDINARY?

When we got back from our trip, we met for the first of our three formal sessions, in the same comfortable, no-frills room we'd eaten in, seated around tables pushed together so they formed a U. Each participant discussed his paper, and, as I've said, believers and skeptics got along without fighting.

There was, however, a certain lack of balance: believers were outnumbered. Among those who'd written papers stating an opinion, Sheaffer, Evans, and Brookesmith are abduction skeptics, and only Pflock was a believer (or at least he believed in the Hill case); that's a victory for skeptics, three to one. If we count Bullard on the believing side, then it's three to two. If we add Webb and Kottmeyer (who wrote papers for the book, but weren't there), each side gains one player, so now it's four to three. If, finally, we throw in Truzzi, Stacy, and me, it's six to four (counting Stacy as a skeptic, and Truzzi, emotionally, at least, as one; he comes down that way, I'd judge, in the summary he wrote after all our meetings).

There were, of course, other reasons, and good ones, for deciding who'd take part—Pflock and Brookesmith, who made the choices, wanted people who would get along, which might have ruled out many interesting names. But I wish they'd asked someone from the strongly pro-abduction side—an abduction researcher, in fact—to write a paper. And not just for balance; there are problems that only someone from that camp could properly address.

Suppose, for instance, that we decide the Hills really were abducted. Would that make other abductions more believable? In principle, it clearly would, but does the Hill abduction resemble other cases? Parts of it seem unique. Have other abductees said they've seen star maps, been offered books, or met aliens who (as the Hills reported) didn't seem to know what time was? It's hard to answer that, because most abduction cases—the vast majority—have never been published. So here we have another field of expertise, along with astronomy and dermatology, that, ideally, we might have gotten help with. We could have had an abduction researcher to talk about unpublished cases, to find parallels with the Hills perhaps, or else to tell us why each case is unique, and why lack of parallels—to the extent that they're lacking; in many ways, the Hill abduction really is like other cases—shouldn't be a problem.

And the inquiry could be reversed: If we think other abductions have happened, does that give us any stronger reason to believe the Hills? Or must we rigorously judge each case only by its own evidence?

But let this go. Our group might have been imbalanced, but all of us seemed to do our best, and as I've said, skeptics and believers didn't fight. Sheaffer and I, far apart in our views of UFOs, found common ground in opera. As I've noted, he sings opera, and I used to sing opera myself; currently I compose operas, and at the time of these discussions I also reviewed opera performances in my day job as a classical music critic. (I've since moved away from that; I compose much more, and I spend much of my professional life speaking, writing, teaching, and serving as a consultant, specializing in all of these areas on the future of classical music, a question that in its way is just as vexed as the Hill affair.)

So Robert and I had a lot to talk about apart from UFOs. And the civility we all showed to each other led to one small triumph during Sheaffer's presentation. In no way was this a crucial turning point in our debate; it offered no reason to believe the Hills either had or hadn't been abducted. But it showed how reasonable we often were—and demonstrated, too, how skeptics and believers can clarify their issues, and at least agree on what each side has to do to prove its case.

Here's what happened. The Hills had said they'd seen three bright objects in the sky, the moon, Jupiter, and their UFO. Sheaffer told us that even without the UFO, there were three bright objects in the sky that night—Jupiter, the moon, and also Saturn, which (as he showed us with slides he made with astronomy software) wasn't far from the moon and Jupiter. "If," he said, "a UFO was present, Betty would have reported three objects [near the moon], not two. Since she reported two, and there were two, we can conclude that she saw Jupiter and Saturn." Or, to put this differently, she saw Jupiter and Saturn near the moon, and mistook Jupiter—because it's very bright—for a UFO.

But was this likely? Saturn isn't nearly as bright as Jupiter. Would the Hills have noticed it? Sheaffer, always thorough, went outside the night before we talked about all this, and looked at the sky. "At 11 p.m.," he told us, "it was cloudy. But at 1 a.m. I could see Saturn very clearly. The argument that Betty couldn't see Saturn doesn't hold, because I could see it." [In the final, published version of his paper he adds that others in our group joined him in his observations and could see Saturn, too.]

Brookesmith (proving that neither skeptics nor believers need to support every argument on their own side) wondered how the Hills' UFO could have been any astronomical object, since Barney said he'd looked at it with binoculars and seen something larger than a star or a planet. To be precise, this would have been the second time that Barney used binoculars. He used them first when the supposed UFO was still near the moon, and seen only a point of light. A little later, though, the light—or so the Hills said—had moved and, as Stacy wrote in his case summary, "[b]ringing the binoculars to bear again, Barney could now make out a shape as opposed to a nebulous light source." "I find it difficult," Brookesmith said, "to believe that looking at a star through binoculars would produce an image that fills the view." He noted, too, that there weren't any notable astronomical objects in the area where Barney pointed his binoculars the second time. "So," Brookesmith said, "he was looking at something else."

"He was in a state of excitement," Sheaffer said. "He was in a UFO frame of mind. When people are in this, they get excited about many things. A plane or a meteor must have come across." Or in other words, Barney first saw Jupiter and got aroused because he thought it was a UFO. Then, quite by chance, a plane or meteor appeared. Barney whipped out his binoculars and of course saw something larger than a point of light.

Pflock said he'd also looked for Saturn, searching for it in the clear night skies above his home in New Mexico. But his report wasn't quite like Sheaffer's. "Saturn was a bright pinpoint, not that prominent," Pflock said. "The moon, 10 days old, near full, was brilliant and wiped out everything near it. Jupiter shone like a beacon." Under those conditions, Pflock thought, the Hills would not have noticed Saturn. He enlisted his wife ("an unwilling experimental subject") to see if she'd agree. "She saw the moon and Jupiter," Pflock said, "but nothing else."

Bullard then brought up further objections. First, Betty Hill sketched what she said she saw that night; her drawing shows the moon, Jupiter, and the UFO. Sheaffer, too, had made a diagram to show where the moon, Jupiter, and Saturn were, but it doesn't look like Betty's sketch. Betty had placed two dots, Jupiter and the UFO, to the left of the moon; in Sheaffer's drawing, Jupiter is on the left, but Saturn is below the moon and a little to the right. "If [her] picture is in any way accurate," Bullard said, pointing to the bottom of Betty Hill's sketch, "Saturn should be down here"—if, that is, you assume that Sheaffer was right, and that Betty had really drawn Jupiter and Saturn.

Besides, Bullard continued, the Hills said they'd seen the UFO moving in front of the mountains, something Jupiter couldn't do.

"Passing in front of the mountains," Pflock agreed.

"Was that hypnosis testimony?" Sheaffer asked, understandably suspicious, because things recalled under hypnosis aren't always accurate.

"No, it's in Webb," Pflock replied, referring to one of the canonical documents of the Hill case—a report Walter Webb had written when the case was new, just after after he'd interviewed the Hills, and long before they were hypnotized.

Pflock later told me that he'd been wrong, that in fact the Hills described only the UFO's passing behind the mountains. Or, as he further asserted, "It's only by implication from the maneuvers [the object] made immediately before the first close encounter in the field near Indian Head, that it [could have been] seen moving in front of the mountains."

But this demonstrates only how complicated the Hill case is, and again how hard (and how crucial) Stacy's job of accounting for each detail was. And Pflock's mistake doesn't affect a remarkable concession that Sheaffer made. With an honesty rare in UFO debate, he granted one point to those who disagreed with him. "If Betty's statements are taken as literal truth," he said, "then my hypothesis cannot be correct."

This is the triumph I talked about. It wasn't a triumph for believers, because Sheaffer wasn't saying he was wrong. In fact, after granting that he couldn't be correct if Hill's report was accurate, he quickly added, "But given her later record, I don't accept [her statements]," a caveat that's not unreasonable. Sheaffer also observed that, as all of us knew, there are famous UFO cases in which people fall into exactly the sort of mistake he thinks Hill made. But Sheaffer's concession was a triumph for reason. That the Hills saw Jupiter is, indeed, one possible hypothesis. But we can't say it's proved until we prove that Betty's recollections (as recorded in her sketch and by Walter Webb) weren't accurate. Maybe that seems obvious, but I've seen many questions like this come up in UFO discussions, and rarely, if ever, have they been clarified so dispassionately.

LIMITS OF EXPERTISE

It's sad, then, that—at least as I see it—we didn't make as much progress in other areas. Sometimes we seemed uneasy about challenging each other. After Bullard's presentation, nobody objected to anything he said. That didn't make sense. Certainly Brookesmith disagreed with Bullard; he'd said so in his paper.

As gently as I could, I suggested that people who disagreed with Bullard ought to say so. Sheaffer was the first to speak. Bullard had argued, as he often has before, that abduction narratives don't behave like folklore. For one thing, as he said, they represent "a real leap of creativity" in our culture, since they can't be found in science fiction or in earlier UFO reports. "I would never say Betty isn't creative," Sheaffer jabbed, with sharp, quick irony.

Bullard also argues that abduction narratives don't change as much as folklore does; the events in them, for instance, tend to show up in the same order, which he wouldn't expect if the tales were only folklore. Here Brookesmith challenged him. The events, Brookesmith said, "are in the [same] order in science fiction."

"But there's no exact match [for the stories] in science fiction," Bullard replied.

"But you do find some of the elements," Sheaffer said. In 1992, at a seminal conference on abductions that convened at MIT, he'd presented an old Buck Rogers comic strip, in which catlike aliens beam a woman up into their spaceship and examine her just as many abductees say they're examined, on a long, flat table (Sheaffer, 1994).

"But the next question," Bullard said, "is why so few people are capable of telling these stories." Skeptics argue that the sources of abduction narratives lie all around us, ready-made, in movies, TV shows, and books. But if that's true, Bullard argues, why don't more people invent the tales? Shouldn't it be easy?

Sheaffer had a simple explanation: "Not everybody can write *Macbeth.*"

"At least with abductees," Bullard said, "you have people willing to discuss fantastic stories. Why don't they change the order of events?"

"In Eddie's own writing," Brookesmith said, "he reports stories in which there's a lot of variation."

"Surprisingly little," Bullard said.

"My impression," Brookesmith said, "is that the order of events is not as fixed as you want your readers to believe."

And here, after a few more remarks, the discussion faded. We resumed it at other points but left important issues all but untouched. Do abduction narratives change? Certainly they seem to (this was a point I made in our discussions). Some abductees now say they know their abductors' names (LaVigne-Wedel, 1995). Some think they've seen human body parts in alien caverns ("Branton," 1999). Some think they've seen the U.S. military help the aliens (Haley, 1993). Some think that prayer can stop abductions (Druffel, 1998). Why aren't these the kinds of changes we'd expect to see in folklore?

In an email to me, Bullard elaborated his argument. Abductees continue to report the core experiences, he said. And though they elaborate these in new ways, the elaboration doesn't fundamentally change what's going on. "If imagination was hard at work in abduction," Bullard wrote, "I would expect little of the dogged fidelity to core events that I see. I would rather expect more idiosyncratic elaboration, more independent claims without a tie to core events." He touched on some of this in New Hampshire, too. But he and Brookesmith, courteously jousting, never specified—either individually or, better still, together (which really would have been a step forward)—how much variation should count as a lot. A half-empty glass will also seem half full; what strikes Bullard as just a slight elaboration might look to someone else like a leap into wholesale fantasy. So we need to calibrate our measurements. If we're going to argue about similarities in abduction reports, we need a common standard.

And there are ways to find one. Later in our sessions, Truzzi (none too patiently, I thought) suggested we approach another disagreement by applying standard social-science protocols, some of which could just as helpfully be used here as well. There's a way to measure perceived similarity. Bullard could provide abduction narratives; Brookesmith could assemble some known folklore (variants, perhaps, of common urban legends). Then we'd find neutral judges who'd compare the stories in each collection and rate their similarity on a numerical scale. We'd average their ratings and end up with a score for each collection, a quantifiable (if not faultless) measure of how similar or different the various stories seemed. Without this or something like it, we don't get much further than stating (and endlessly restating) our opposing views.

I also think we didn't go far enough with Brookesmith's concept of an abduction myth, a cultural formation compelling enough to make people believe abduction stories might be true. Bullard readily agreed (as would anyone with common sense) that, as he put it, "there's a mythic dimension to UFOs." But he doesn't think this tells us much. People who get caught up in myths, he said, are simply responding to a human need, a need to find "big patterns that supply organizational structure for our understanding." These patterns can be compelling for those who study culture, but they're too "vague," Bullard said, to generate anything as specific as an abduction story.

That indeed sounds plausible. But I'd like to know what other social scientists might think. And where would all of Bullard's abduction arguments stand with other folklorists? Here we tumble deep within a problem in ufology. Bullard will understand that I'm not questioning his competence, but normally, in any field of scholarship or science, there's more than one opinion—by which I mean more than one opinion from specialists within the field. To see this demonstrated, just read the Science Times section of the *New York Times,* which is published every Tuesday. Whenever there's a story about something new, a novel theory maybe, or some controversial research, there will be opinions pro and con, several of them, all from well-known scientists who themselves have done research in whatever area is being discussed.

In ufology, though, we have just one folklorist, Eddie Bullard. For all we know, other folklorists might disagree with him, if any of them studied abductions. Here, of course, we have an extra difficulty, since most scholars in any field don't know much about UFOs and tend to share the skeptical prejudice that often goes along with ignorance in much of mainstream thinking. That might make their contributions suspect. (A group of psychologists pondered abductions in a special issue of a psychology journal, *Psychological Inquiry,* and looked silly because they didn't know enough about the issue (see, for instance, Newman and Baumeister, 1996.) This in turn might help explain why Bullard seems to be a folklore outsider, and also shows, in spite of everything I'm saying here, how lucky we are to have him.

But we still need other views, especially since, in New Hampshire, Bullard's most learned challenger was Peter Brookesmith who, for all his brilliance, is not a folklorist at all. He's told me that he "was at one time an expert on folk song and its transmission." That was "a long time ago," he added, "but I still know enough about folklore (and have shelves of it) to be able to challenge Ed from an erudite base." But—without questioning Brookesmith's erudition—there's still a difference between someone who works actively in any field and someone else who's only read the literature. Active scholars, for one thing, inevitably read more of it. Secondly—because they talk to colleagues and attend conferences—they know, better than any outsider can, where their reading fits, in the overall perspective of the field.

I'll use myself as an example, because I've also tread incautiously where experts ought to roam. When I wrote my essay "The Abduction Conundrum," I'd read papers on hypnosis in psychology journals. I found some that contradicted the prevailing view that hypnosis can't retrieve memories (Sandow, 1998). A psychologist, however, might not have been impressed: "You didn't know that one of those papers was debunked in a journal you haven't read," she might say. "And the third paper you cite was strongly questioned at a conference last year." Nonprofessionals enter these discussions at their peril.

We faced yet another social science problem when we approached the vexed question of cultural influence on abduction reports—and, more specifically, how a famous episode from *The Outer Limits* might have influenced the Hills. This episode, "The Bellero Shield," was telecast (as Martin Kottmeyer discovered years ago) on February 10, 1964, just a little less than three weeks before Barney Hill was first hypnotized; it showed an alien with two features that Barney reported under hypnosis: eyes that wrap around the head and are said to "speak" (Kottmeyer, 1994; Brookesmith, 1998).

OUTER LIMITS, MEDIA INFLUENCES

We had fun one night watching "The Bellero Shield" on video. I was glad to have some entertainment even if, pro forma, this was work. Sheaffer and I had talked about making some music together, with him singing, and me playing the piano. I'd also thought of showing him a tenor aria from an opera I'm writing, which I could have played from my laptop. But we never did any of that, which (at least for me) made the fun of "The Bellero Shield" even more welcome.

The evening felt like boys' night out. We sat around a large TV screen, drinks in hand, watching this eye-popping old show, which veered between low drama and high camp. I wasn't much impressed by the alien, an elfin innocent who descends to earth on beams of light. But the human characters were astonishing, and so was the cinematography, and also the script, full of lines like "Great men are forgiven their murderous wives" (solemnly declaimed, as if this were something Shakespeare had mistakenly left out of *Macbeth*). Three of the leads—Martin Landau, Sally Kellerman, and Chita Rivera—went on to greater things, and here were variously strong or loony or, in Rivera's case, both strong and wildly loony. She plays a sinister maid who keeps going up and down stairs barefoot. The camera explores her feet in dire closeups, as if they reeked of something dark and feral. If I'd been hypnotized that night and made up an abduction story, I'd have screamed, "The feet! The feet!"

But back to Barney Hill. We'd seen his sketch of his alleged abductors. Now that we'd viewed *The Outer Limits* episode—none of us had ever seen it before—did we think his alien looked like the "Bellero" being?

Brookesmith thought it did. In fact, he said, the TV alien looked even more like Barney's drawing than he'd thought it would. Pflock noticed what he thought was an important difference: The TV alien had a wide mouth, while the mouth in Barney's drawing looks, as Pflock said, "vestigial." (Were our Hill beliefs shaping our reactions?) Bullard told us he accepted the connection. Two striking features—wraparound eyes and eyes that speak—are linked, he said, in Barney's narrative. And why, he asked, should they show up together? There's no inherent logic in their linkage. So if they first were joined in *The Outer Limits,* the TV show might well be their source. (Here Bullard is consistent; he's reasoning exactly as he does about abduction narratives. There he also finds no special logic in the order in which events show up. But since, he says, the order is consistent, it can't be written off to mere invention or to chance.)

But then does "The Bellero Shield" prove that Barney fantasized the alien? No, said Bullard, because "even if [Barney's] experience is true, you would expect [him to add] extraneous details," which could come from television or any other source.

But there's a larger question here. What standards should we use to judge whether an abduction story—or all abduction stories—might be generated by the media? Twice Truzzi offered some idea of what those standards might be. We shouldn't simply speculate, he said, about what TV shows the Hills had seen. Instead—since nobody can prove that Barney really saw *The Outer Limits*—we ought to look for solid data: "What library books did Betty check out? Or what books did the library hold? What books were in her house?" Nor, Truzzi added, should we simply assert that Barney's alien is or isn't like the *Outer Limits* one. Here's where he suggested we use the social science protocol I mentioned earlier. To decide what influence, if any, "The Bellero Shield" might have had, Truzzi said we ought to have "impartial judges rank the Hill case with other abduction cases, as more or less like the TV show."

We almost never do things like that in ufology. (There's a notable exception: a paper in *The Journal of UFO Studies*, which studied possible bias in the *New York Times'* UFO coverage, using impartial judges to rate *Times* stories as pro- or anti-UFO; Hickman et al., 1996.) Instead, we argue loosely. Someone will find anticipations of abduction reports in movies or TV. (It's easy to do.) This, the person then insists, is evidence that abduction narratives could—or did—come from the media.

But is it really? Credentialed social scientists wouldn't argue any point so casually. Here's an example of how they work, from a recent study conducted by researchers at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Their subject was something important and controversial—whether violence on TV shows encourages kids to be violent. This seems more or less exactly parallel to what we've been talking about in ufology: The assertion that media coverage of abduction reports is an important, or even a principal, cause of them. (In its broadest form, this becomes what's often called the "psychosocial hypothesis," the theory that cultural factors, including media coverage, are a leading cause of every kind of UFO report.)

The Columbia and New York State researchers began with something their counterparts in UFO research (whichever side of the argument they're on) almost never have available—statistical data (Kolata, 2002). In ufology, we'll argue whether Barney Hill watched *The Outer Limits,* but, as Brookesmith points out in his book on abductions, we don't really know the answer (Brookesmith, 1998). More broadly, we'll debate the influence of the media on UFO reports, but we don't have data about that, either. We don't know, for instance, how many people who claim they've been abducted actually see the TV shows and movies that supposedly have influenced them, or (which would be a more precise and important consideration) how carefully abductees pay attention to such things and whether they pay more attention than nonabductees do.

As an aside, I'll note that the debate about this can grow so rarified that it's almost metaphysical. Betty Hill, for instance, says Barney never watched *The Outer Limits,* first because neither he nor she watched science fiction shows, and also because he either worked at night when the show aired or would be out of the house doing community work (Clark, 1998; Brookesmith, 1998). Brookesmith, however—supplementing what's in his abduction book—told us that Barney didn't leave for work until the show was over. He's also noticed that Betty made a joking reference to *The Twilight Zone,* quoted in chapter seven of John G. Fuller's famous book about the case, *The Interrupted Journey* (Fuller, 1966). So Barney could have watched *The Outer Limits,* and Betty, at least, was aware of at least one other science fiction series. It follows, then, that nobody can prove that Barney didn't watch "The Bellero Shield," or, for that matter, that he didn't hear about the show from someone else. But if we can't prove he wasn't somehow touched by it, then, by generally accepted scientific principles, we also can't prove that he was, and so the whole debate is moot, its resolution, for all practical purposes, unknowable.

But back to the New York study on the media and violence. These researchers, as I've said, have something we almost never have: relevant statistics. For 17 years, they studied children in 707 families in two counties in northern

New York State and found that those who watched TV more than seven hours each week were more likely to behave aggressively. They're way ahead of us—they've measured an actual correlation between media exposure and the behavior it's supposed to influence.

But that alone isn't enough; as the researchers themselves acknowledged, they had to adjust for other factors that might influence aggression, like poverty, neglect, and emotional disorders. And even then the question wasn't settled. Their figures showed only a weak correlation between watching TV and aggression. Nor did it seem to matter which shows these children watched; even kids who chose nonviolent shows were more likely to be aggressive if they watched more than seven hours of TV each week. Which meant, according to a medical statistician who criticized the research, that the study really raised a different question, namely "what makes kids different who watch TV for many hours as compared to those who watch little?" (Kolata, 2002). Which shows that even careful research, done with proper protocols, doesn't always give us ready answers. But at least this study tried to ask the proper questions, something that doesn't often happen in ufology, where often we forget—or at least we seem to—that social science can be just as treacherous for amateurs as physical science is.

And the arts play a role here, too, because *pace* Bullard, eyes that speak or otherwise communicate don't need to be traced back to *The Outer Limits.* They're commonplace in literature. The first reference that occurred to me was an old English song, "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes," the lyrics of which come from a 1616 poem by Ben Jonson, "To Celia": "Drink to me only with thine eyes,/ And I will pledge with mine." But a quick search in standard dictionaries of quotations, available on the Internet, found dozens more, including these:

"He speaketh not; and yet there lies/ A conversation in his eyes." (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Hanging of the Crane," 1875.)

"Where words are restrained, the eyes often talk a great deal." (Samuel Richardson, one of the first important British novelists, in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison,* 1753.)

"Why have your eyes gone into their own room?/*Goodnight* they are saying/ from their little leathery doors." (Anne Sexton, "Your Face on the Dog's Neck," 1965.)

"She dared no more than ask him with her eyes/ How was it with him for a second trial./ And with his eyes he asked her not to ask." (Robert Frost, "Not to Keep," 1917.)

Literary scholars, or simply people more well read than I am, could cite many more examples. The eyes, in any case, are proverbially known as "the windows of the soul" (the phrase turns out to come from Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, a 16th-century French poet). Did Barney Hill know that? We don't know, but to conclude that he might have, we hardly have to prove that he'd read anything I've cited here. We only have to guess that he was literate. (The website I searched, where many reference books are available, was Bartleby.com; search the Quotations field for "eyes.")

"LIFE IS COMPLICATED"

When we talked about psychology, Truzzi suggested yet another protocol. We debate, he said, Betty Hill's reactions to her experience. But we don't know enough about how people react to anomalous experiences generally. "Here is where science hasn't done its work," Truzzi said. "We have information on reactions to things that did and didn't happen. We have reactions to magicians, who weren't really doing what they seemed to do. We have cases where people deny things that clearly did happen. If we had a pattern of reactions to anomalous data, we could say that Betty did or didn't fit."

The same, of course, could be said about hypotheses of media influence. If we had studies of it really taking place, if we had theories of its operation and proven models of its functioning, we'd be better grounded when we looked for it in individual cases. But we need even more grounding when we talk about psychology. Not, of course, that we weren't reasonable when we considered Betty's mental state, even though we're hardly psychiatric professionals. Sheaffer, as ever, took the strongest "anti" view. "You've heard her," he said to all of us. "She doesn't make sense. Why believe anything she said?" Or, more pungently: "If Betty is unhinged today, she was unhinged 25 years ago [when she claimed the same kind of UFO sightings she claims now]. But we think she was hinged properly 35 years ago [when she had her famous UFO experience], and we think so because she told the story about aliens. I don't like that logic. I suspect we'd find significant loopiness back then."

"Life is complicated," Truzzi answered. "It's more comfortable if things are consistent. But we can't dismiss her claims just because of that."

"And we have Barney," Bullard said (though one of our problems is that we don't have him; we only have reports of him, plus a few TV appearances on videotape, and recordings of his hypnosis sessions).

Firmage, who sat in on this part of our discussion, again put things in his own perspective. "We have a larger mystery called UFOs," he said. "If [Betty] really was picked up, she'd be awash in an intellectual vacuum, with no framework to integrate it in. It's reasonable to expect that all kinds of weirdness would emerge in how she recounts her life." Some of us seemed impressed by that. And even Sheaffer could agree that "if Barney had lived—in defense of Betty, what may have gotten her unhinged was his death. Though I still question whether she was hinged in the first place."

But then it's well known (as we can read in Bullard's paper) that, in four studies, most abductees who were given standard psychological tests seemed normal. Would Betty Hill have been more disturbed than these later abductees, because abductions weren't well known when she reported hers, and because she took the extra risk of speaking publicly?

Though even when we ask these questions, we're only using commonsense psychology, where anyone can have a voice. When Evans spoke about his paper, we entered territory where, once more, we might assume we'd need some experts. I'm not saying that Evans didn't do a noble job, recounting (with great compassion) psychological curiosities that most of us, except for Brookesmith, may not know much about. He spoke modestly but with great assurance, which made sense since he's studied what he talked about for many years. "I am a picture librarian," he quietly began. "That does not qualify me to speak except in one sense—I can give things categories. In the library where I work, flying saucers were first put into 'transport,' as a category, then into 'paranormal,' and they are now in 'folklore.'" (Was he suggesting that we accept that label?)

Evans offered something Truzzi wanted us to find—case studies that gave us data (if not statistical conclusions) about what Evans called "the process of encountering an otherworldly entity." "There is," he said, "one point that has been overlooked, the myth, if I can call it that, that a story as presented was the only scenario available." He meant that people have experiences whose nature isn't known, then explain them in whatever terms make sense to them—and that we're too quick to accept these terms. The Hills thought they'd been abducted by a UFO, so we try to find out if that happened. Someone else, however, might have thought the beings were fairies, or angels, and then we'd be debating that. Or, as Evans said, speaking more generally, many people can live otherwise normal lives, yet claim experiences even stranger than the Hills'. "This could be what Barney and Betty Hill were doing," he suggested. "They could have been living in two worlds at once."

"We never have a final answer," Sheaffer mused. "Why do people engage in strange activities? Hilary is reminding us that there's a whole category of events like these."

Or as Truzzi put it, dry and to the point, "Any of us could be nuts."

DREAMS AND TRAUMA

But here we've run against the limits of mere common sense, which might not impress psychologists, whose job it is (among much else) to tell us who is nuts. To the extent that psychologists have studied abductees at all, they've determined, using tests and clinical evaluations, that they're normal. (Again, see Bullard's paper. I use the phrase "have studied abductees" to distinguish between psychologists who've studied abductees from those who've merely theorized about them.)

Does Evans mean to say those studies might be wrong? I emailed him to ask. He answered, first, that he's not impressed with what psychologists have written about anomalous experiences; too often, he thinks, they're not perceptive or open-minded enough to accept that something unusual might have really happened, whatever its cause might be. "As for abductees showing up normal on psychological tests," he continued, "my response is, on the one hand, who is defining normality? And on the other, is any of us so normal that we can't be thrown off-balance by any number of unusual conditions?" Reasonable points, both of these, and I might also ask whether we have comparable test results for people who say they've seen the Virgin Mary or claim other visitations.

Even if Evans is right to doubt psychologists, I don't see how we can usefully talk about Betty's dreams without their help. Betty had these dreams for five straight nights, about two and a half weeks after her UFO experience; she wrote down a summary of them a few weeks later (it's reprinted in Fuller, 1966). The abduction story surfaced for the first time in these dreams, but they pose a lot of problems, starting with the sad and simple fact that we don't know precisely what Betty dreamed. As she herself said, she didn't write down literally what she dreamed, but instead arranged events within the dreams into a coherent narrative. Who knows what she left out, or might have added?

And how should we understand the relationship between the dreams and any possible reality? Under hypnosis, Betty told almost exactly the same story she'd recounted in her dream summary. Could she have done that if the abduction really happened? Is it normal at all (or at least not unknown) for people to reproduce the exact events of a traumatic experience in their dreams? We can speculate about all this, but here, I felt, our speculation should be put into its proper context. There's a large literature, I told the group, about trauma, dreams, and memory. All of our papers—at least as they were presented at our meeting—barely mentioned this work. But wouldn't we need this literature—and, even more, the specialists who've written it—to help us understand whether Betty's dreams can tell us anything?

After our sessions, Brookesmith studied some of the dream and trauma literature, as did I. One thing I learned is that the study of dreams and trauma is a relatively new field, because until not long ago trauma specialists didn't think about dreams, and dream specialists didn't work with traumas (Barrett, 1996). Bullard revised his paper so he could grapple with all this.

From what I've read, it's apparently not unknown for people who've been traumatized by known, real events to recall them in dreams, for that recall to be precise, and for the dreams (like Betty's) to go on for only a few nights (Hartmann, 1996). But here again we'd better be careful. As I've already said, it's not likely that, as amateurs, we could fully master all the literature. And there are more things in earth and heaven than mere writing can tell us. To really grasp the meaning of the dreams (if that's even possible), I think we need a clinical psychologist, someone who's worked with dreams and trauma and thus can feel his or her way through nuances that can't be learned from literature. Not every traumatic dream, after all, has been cataloged in a journal article. Just as an abduction researcher who knows hundreds of unpublished abduction cases is best equipped to tell us where the Hills' abduction story fits on the abduction spectrum, only a psychologist who's worked with (and discussed) the dreams of perhaps hundreds of trauma victims can begin to tell us what to make of Betty's dreams.

One candidate, had she wished to join our group, might have been Lenore Terr, clinical professor of psychiatry at the School of Medicine of the University of California, San Francisco, and also a psychiatrist in private practice. She's written two wise, humane books, *Too Scared to Cry: Psychic Trauma in Childhood* and *Unchained Memories: True Stories of Traumatic Memories, Lost and Found*, the first a study of children involved in the infamous 1976 Chowchilla, California, school bus kidnapping; the second about adults (some of them Terr's patients, others not) who lost traumatic memories, then recovered them (Terr, 1990; Terr, 1994).

But here I'd better step back a moment and address a well-known controversy. Can traumatic memories in fact be lost, and if so, can they reliably be found again? Many well-read lay people—by whom I mean people who aren't psychologists—assume that both these notions have been thoroughly debunked. That's first, I think, because of the well-known scandal over therapists (or should we call them quacks?) who've encouraged their patients to unearth memories of sexual abuse, even if there's no evidence that abuse ever happened (Loftus, 1994). I hope this doesn't happen as much as it used to, but because it happened so often—or at least was widely talked about—it gave the very idea of recovered memory a bad name.

There have also been allegations of alleged ritual satanic abuse, again based on supposedly recovered memories, again with no evidence that any horrors ever happened (and, in many cases, plenty of evidence that they didn't; Wright, 1994). Nor is it a surprise that some people think alien abduction is yet another recovered-memory fraud (Spanos et al., 1994). Just as in dubious cases of sexual or satanic abuse, abductees retrieve lost memories, often under hypnosis. Some abduction researchers might urge the abductees on, just as therapists or Christian ministers urge people to recover memories of sexual or satanic abuse. And in all three areas, there's no proof that the alleged events ever happened. (Abduction researchers have argued, of course, that these parallels are more apparent than real, in part because many people say they have conscious memories of alien abductions, or else are physically missing while the abductions take place, or wake up with marks or stains. But that's an argument we won't get into here.)

And then there's the boiling dispute over Freud—are his theories correct? Has he been a good or bad influence on psychology and the world?—which involves, among much else, an attack on his theory of repression. Strictly speaking, this should have nothing to do with any argument over recovered memory, since even if repression doesn't operate as Freud theorized, memories might still be buried and unearthed in some other way (see, for instance, Freyd, 1996). But the two disputes spill into each other. There are memory skeptics who reject recovered memory, reject Freud, and in fact get routinely cited in abduction arguments, to support the abduction skeptics' view that we can't trust what abductees say are their memories. The most famous memory skeptic is Elizabeth Loftus, an experimental psychologist at the University of Washington, who's created, in laboratory work with real people, apparent memories of events that never happened (Loftus, 1994).

We might ask whether this was ethical (a charge that's been raised at least privately to me by one well-known psychologist), since Loftus, in her research, implanted false memories in vulnerable children—she made them believe that, scarily, they'd once been lost in a mall, even though that never happened. We might also ask whether it's even news that false memories can be created. Surely all of us have sometimes doubted our own recollections; it's only a step from that to accepting someone else's version of something we were once involved in and substituting that person's memories for our old. The idea, at least, of implantable false memories has been with us at least since the storm over "brainwashing" during the Korean War. If you've seen *The Manchurian Candidate* (or read the Richard Condon novel by the same name that the film is based on), you saw how—at least in fiction, circa 1960—American soldiers could be made to think that one of them had died in combat, when really their communist captors had used mind control to force one of his buddies to murder him. From my rock & roll days, I remember a wonderful anecdote about the first Woodstock festival and the famous film about it, *Woodstock.* The film shows many performances from the event, but out of sequence—their order is changed. Because of that, many people who were at the festival now think the acts appeared in the order that's shown in the film.

Loftus, in any case, is now famous for her research, which she has used to build both theoretical and practical objections to any idea that lost memories could ever resurface reliably (Loftus, 1994). Thus she and Lenore Terr stand on opposite sides of the recovered memory debate. They've even testified as expert witnesses on opposite sides of at least one court case, the murder trial of a man accused, because of his daughter's recovered memories, of killing an eight year-old girl. The prosecution (Terr's side) prevailed at the trial but lost on appeal. The defendant later sued Terr, claiming she'd conspired with the prosecution to testify falsely, but lost his case both at the original court and on appeal (Loftus, 1994; Terr, 1994; *Franklin v. Terr,* 2000). My own reading of this complex mess tells me Terr was likely wrong—not because she lied or conspired, but because the defendant was probably innocent—but that doesn't mean, as some people seem to think, that she was discredited, or that Loftus, apart from this case, holds mainstream views.

In fact, it's Terr who seems to be in the mainstream. We should note, first of all, that she's hardly credulous about recovered memories; she believes in them but insists on having them corroborated. (In the court case, she did think there was corroborating evidence; the defendant got off because of things that hadn't been known at the trial.) And the dispute isn't simply between healthy skeptics and credulous fools, but often between two breeds of psychologists, experimentalists and clinicians. Experimental psychologists raise objections to recovered memories; clinicians, who actually deal with traumatized patients, say they've seen memories of traumatic events get lost and then reappear, with proof available that some of those recovered memories are accurate.

And this, as it happens, is the mainstream position. It's set forth in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), the standard diagnostic manual published by the American Psychiatric Association, where you can read about a condition known as dissociative amnesia, in which, quite literally, "the individual fails to recall events that occurred during a circumscribed period of time, usually the first few hours following a profoundly disturbing event (e.g., the uninjured survivor of a car accident in which a family member has been killed may not be able to recall anything that happened from the time of the accident until 2 days later)." The definition grows more complex as various details are filled in (in one form of this amnesia, for instance, people remember some but not all of what happened—which, I might add, is what abductees very often seem to do). But the book clearly states, "some individuals with chronic amnesia may gradually begin to recall dissociated memories" (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

DSM thus aligns itself with those who believe in recovered memories, and it therefore places them right inside the mainstream of American clinical psychology. With fine finesse, the book does note that there's disagreement over whether dissociative amnesia has been "overreported" (a bow toward the memory skeptics) or "underreported" (the position of therapists who think many of their patients have been sexually abused, then forgot it). But that's its only visible concession to the current controversy, and never does the text acknowledge even a possibility that dissociative amnesia might not exist. So this is the position of mainstream psychologists and psychiatrists; the memory skeptics, despite their publicity, appear to be outsiders, raising a challenge to the mainstream.

LAST THOUGHTS

Because she's a practicing psychiatrist, because one of her specialties is trauma and memory, and because she strikes me as exceptionally reasonable, open-minded, and above all humane, I asked Terr to talk with me about the Hill case. I had no idea what she'd say; I didn't know, for instance, whether she's a UFO believer, a skeptic, or someone who never thinks about UFOs at all. I faxed her my own, shorter version of Stacy's summary, stressing the Hills' feelings, dreams, and memories. I stressed that I wasn't asking her to tell me whether the abduction really happened. I didn't want her to think I was a UFO nut, looking for confirmation—or, for that matter, a naïf who imagines a psychiatrist can tell me what really happened 40 years ago to people she's never met.

But I was curious to know what Terr would think of Betty's dreams. And her answers, when we talked, were sober. Dreams of any kind, she said, "are not 100 percent indicative of trauma." That's first because, as she said, "they're the most easily faked symptom of trauma." And, she went on, true traumatic dreams—unlike Betty's, at least as she recorded them—should "take on additional material. A dream [of someone who actually had been abducted by aliens] wouldn't be expected only to have material of alien abduction. It would also include a fight with your mother in law, or your indigestion of the night before."

And if dreams are the easiest traumatic symptom to fake, a specific fear—like Barney Hill's fear of being in his home (which Kathy Marsden had told us about)—is, Terr said, the next easiest. "But a personality change," she added, "is not easy to make up." Thus Barney's depression, which Marsden had also described, might suggest that something—not necessarily an alien abduction, of course—had really happened. (So might Betty's apparent flight into fantasy, if we assume she once was sensible, and then started seeing UFOs even when they weren't there.)

Terr also seemed impressed to learn that both Hills felt dirty just after the incident. "That's confirmatory," she said (meaning that she thinks it might suggest a real event)—"if someone knew the details of what made them feel unclean." But that "if" points to the most important thing, at least in my view, that Terr said about the case. As I've said (and as she strongly confirmed to me), she absolutely won't accept recovered memories without corroboration. So she wants to know if anyone can confirm even the presence of a UFO at the time when the Hills had their experience. Did any UFO show up on radar? Did anybody call the Air Force to ask? I'd told Terr about the strange pink substance that Betty said she'd found on her dress. Why, Terr asked me, didn't Betty have it analyzed?

And from there, Terr went on to big abduction questions. Why do people think the aliens have sex with them? Isn't that impossible? How could aliens interbreed with us? What did I think about John Mack? It's not surprising that he was the only abduction researcher she seemed to know about, because he too was a psychiatrist, a well-known figure in her field, and in fact had done grand rounds in psychiatric hospitals, presenting his abduction views to his colleagues.

So that's how we spent most of our conversation, batting these giant questions back and forth. Terr seemed both exasperated and genuinely curious—exasperated because she thinks abductions sound like nonsense, but also curious, in fact eager to learn more, because apparently she'd never talked to anyone who might be able to sort the subject out for her. If she'd joined our group, she could have talked to us about psychology. But we might have also spent a lot of time teaching her Abductions 101.

And so I'm left with one last rueful thought. To penetrate the Hill case, Pflock and Brookesmith rounded up the usual suspects—specialists on anomalies, and especially on UFOs, whose great advantage is that they know the territory and aren't easily surprised or spooked. "I urge everyone," Firmage at one point said, "to keep open the possibility that this event is real. Why would anyone think no event like this could happen?"

"Not even Robert thinks that," Truzzi had responded, and the larger point, I think, is that everybody in our group, including our severest skeptics, has been through these woods enough to know what monsters dwell in them. Unlike newcomers, we can't easily be rattled.

But precisely because we're specialists in anomalies, we don't know enough about other subjects crucial for our inquiry. That's a dilemma ufology should resolve, if it's going to move forward.

REFERENCES

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed., text revision. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.

Appelle, Stuart. "The Abduction Experience: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Evidence." *Journal of UFO Studies,* new ser. 6 (1995/1996): 29–78. Also available online at www.nidsci.org/pdf/appelle.pdf.

Barrett, Deirdre, ed. *Trauma and Dreams*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996. Introduction.

Branton [pseud.]. *The Dulce Wars: Underground Alien Bases and the Battle for Planet Earth.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Inner Light/Global Communications, 1999. Also available on the UFO Network website at www.ufon.org/html/the_dulce_book_-_branton.html.

Brookesmith, Peter. *Alien Abductions*. London: Blandford, 1998.

Clark, Jerome. "Hill Abduction Case." *The UFO Enclyclopedia*, 2nd ed. Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1998.

Druffel, Ann. *How to Defend Yourself Against Alien Abduction*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.

Franklin v. Terr, 201 F.3d 1098, 1101 (9th Cir. 2000). Available on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit website at www.ca9.uscourts.gov/ca9/newopinions.nsf/04485f8dcbd4e1ea882569520074e698/4ee5af0c3b7150d188256952007578a1?OpenDocument.

Freyd, Jennifer J. *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Fuller, John G. *The Interrupted Journey*. New York: Dial Press, 1966.

Haley, Leah A. *Lost Was the Key*. Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Greenleaf Publications, 1993.

Hartmann, Ernest. "Who Develops PTSD Nightmares and Who Doesn't." In *Trauma and Dreams,* edited by Deirdre Barrett. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Hickman, John C., E. Dale McConkey II, and Matthew A. Barrett. "Fewer Sightings in the National Press: A Content Analysis of UFO News Coverage in *The New York Times,* 1947-1995." *Journal of UFO Studies,* new ser. 6 (1995/1996): 213–225.

Hill, Betty. *A Common Sense Approach to UFOs*. Greenland, N.H.: The author, 1995.

Kolata, Gina. "A Study Finds More Links Between TV and Violence." *New York Times*, March 29, 2002.

Kottmeyer, Martin. "The Eyes That Spoke." *REALL News* 2, no. 7 (July 1994). Available on the REALL website at www.reall.org/newsletter/v02/n07/index.html.

LaVigne-Wedel, Michelle. *The Alien Abduction Survival Guide: How to Cope with Your ET Experience*. Newberg, Oreg.: Wild Flower Press, 1995.

Loftus, Elizabeth F., and Katherine Ketcham. *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Newman, Leonard S., and Roy F. Baumeister. "Toward an Explanation of the UFO Abduction Phenomenon: Hypnotic Elaboration, Extraterrestrial Sadomasochism, and Spurious Memories." *Psychological Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (1996): 99–126.

Sandow, Greg. "The Abduction Conundrum." *The Anomalist* 7 (Winter 1998/1999): 37–70. Also available at www.gregsandow.com/ufo/Contents/Abduction_Conundrum/abduction_conundrum.htm.

Sheaffer, Robert. "A Skeptical Perspective on UFO Abductions." In *Alien Discussions: The Unabridged Proceedings of the Abduction Study Conference,* edited by Andrea Pritchard, et al., 382–386. North Cambridge, Mass.: North Cambridge Press, 1994.

Spanos, Nicholas P., Cheryl A, Burgess, and Melissa-Faith Burgess. "Past-life Identities, UFO Abductions, and Satanic Ritual Abuse: The Social Construction of Memories." *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 42, no. 4 (Oct. 1994): 443–446.

Terr, Lenore. *Too Scared To Cry: Psychic Trauma in Childhood.* New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Terr, Lenore. *Unchained Memories: True Stories of Traumatic Memories, Lost and Found.* New York: Basic Books, 1994.

Wright, Lawrence. *Remembering Satan*. New York: Knopf, 1994. ✦

MoD RELEASES UFO FILES

Hundreds of documented sightings of UFOs across the United Kingdom will be released by the Ministry of Defence to the National Archive this spring. Detailed accounts of sightings around Bonnybridge, Scotland, are expected to be among the files. The town became famous in the 1990s after locals reported objects in the sky.

A spokesman for the MoD said the secret files date back more than 10 years. "The files contain information about UFO sightings by members of the public and include photographs that people have taken or drawings they have done," he said. "There is no scientific data included in the files, just the public reports which may also include a comment from nearby RAF bases saying whether there was flight activity when the sightings took place."—BBC News, March 4.

AIRSHIPS—*continued from page 14*

Still, for whatever it's worth, during the famous French autumn 1954 wave, a railroad worker reported coming upon a tube-shaped object. Just outside it was a man "either covered with hair or wearing a long, hairy overcoat," in the words of a *Christian Science Monitor* account (October 15). When he spoke to the stranger, the latter replied in a language unknown to the questioner. As the witness left to report the incident, the figure reentered the craft and flew away.

FOOTNOTES

1. "A Chronology of Flight," documenting real-life aviation history from 1709 into 1947, appears as an appendix (pp. 203–16) to Gordon I. R. Lore Jr. and Harold H. Deneault Jr.'s *Mysteries of the Skies: UFOs in Perspective* (1968). It is a useful guide to the evolution of flying machines, from balloons to dirigibles to airplanes.

2. On August 27, 1973, the *Albany* (Oregon) *Democrat-Herald* reported the testimony of a local resident, Herbert DeMott, who recalled a strange encounter in 1906, when he was 10 years old and living near Mitchell, South Dakota. He said he had seen a "craft" land near a well. A door opened, and "I was welcomed inside" by two ordinary-looking men sitting on "camp stools." In conversation with him, they discussed (in the fashion of 1897 aeronauts) the ship's propulsion system, offering the usual pseudoscientific bafflegab. In DeMott's paraphrase: "The outer shell of the craft was filled with helium gas, and when the lever was moved the magnetism from the earth was cut off, allowing the craft to rise." The occupants drew water from a horse trough "to be used in making electricity." They refused to reveal anything about themselves or their place of origin. ✦

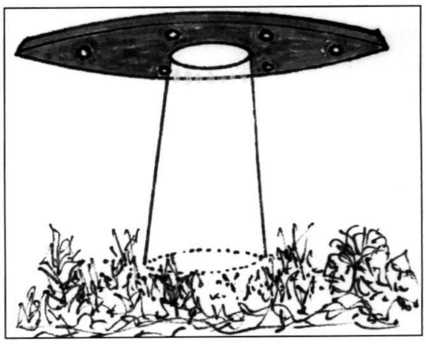
UNUSUAL TRAIL OVER P.E.I.

A UFO research group in Manitoba has been unable to identify a mysterious sighting in the sky over Prince Edward Island on January 2. Chris Rutkowski, research coordinator for Ufology Research in Manitoba, said the object trailing a dark, spiraling plume behind it is not a UFO, but he was at a loss to identify exactly what it was that Tony and Marie Quigley of North Tryon captured on video. "We're puzzled," Rutkowski said. "But we're fairly certain it was terrestrial phenomena."

Don Ledger, a UFO researcher and author who lives in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, believes the object was space junk. He cites the launch in mid-December of a NASA Atlas rocket carrying a satellite for the U.S. National Reconnaissance Office, the agency that coordinates spy satellites south of the border. Environment Canada and the Transportation Safety Board examined the video, but were also stumped, suggesting it might have been a fighter jet dumping fuel.—*Ottawa Citizen,* January 4; *Saskatoon Star Phoenix,* March 5; CBC News, March 7.

THE FORCE—*continued from page 17*

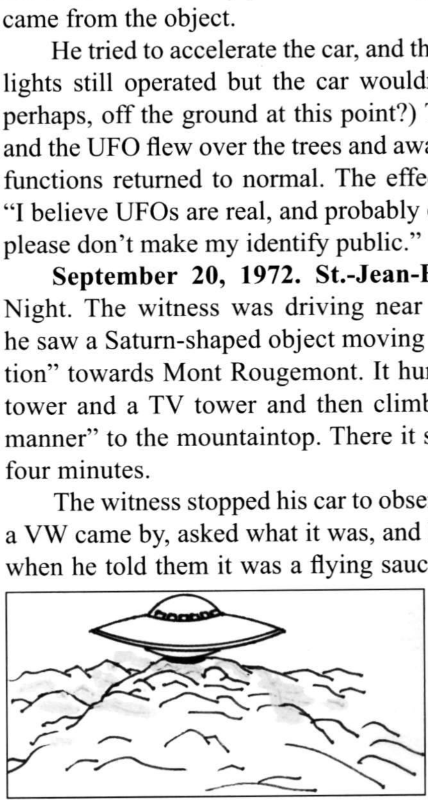
and green light show for him as it hovered. A large central beam shone starkly onto the field below. Our driver was definitely not calmed by this show of (early) Christmas spirit. He said that he became almost paralyzed by fear, and his jaw was clenched so tight that it wouldn't move. The car radio burst with static. He noticed that there was "an uneasy feeling" about the whole car. A "very peculiar whirring, sickening sound" came from the object.



He tried to accelerate the car, and the engine and headlights still operated but the car wouldn't move. (Was it, perhaps, off the ground at this point?) The sound stopped and the UFO flew over the trees and away. Radio and drive functions returned to normal. The effect on our witness? "I believe UFOs are real, and probably extraterrestrial, but please don't make my identify public."

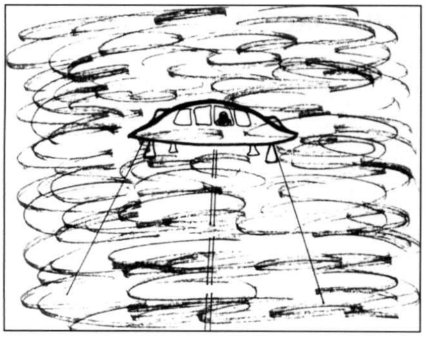
September 20, 1972. St.-Jean-Baptiste, Quebec. Night. The witness was driving near Rougemont when he saw a Saturn-shaped object moving in "pendulum motion" towards Mont Rougemont. It hurdled a microwave tower and a TV tower and then climbed "in a step-like manner" to the mountaintop. There it settled in for about four minutes.

The witness stopped his car to observe. Two women in a VW came by, asked what it was, and hurriedly drove off when he told them it was a flying saucer. He watched the object increasingly brighten (mainly from a row of "windows" along the upper dome of the disk-shaped UFO) and glow pink on the bottom side. The disk was about 100 feet in diameter. It rose when he flashed his headlights at it.



Then it dove at his car, passing just 30 feet above. The engine stalled, the headlights dimmed, and the radio died. A wave of heat passed over him. The UFO raced away, and presumably (not stated) the car began functioning again. The effect on the witness was both curiosity (he returned with others to investigate the mountaintop, finding some browning of treetops, but perhaps nothing significant), and wonderment about "the obvious intelligence behind all this."

August 6, 1976. Gaspésie Park, Quebec. 10 a.m. It was a foggy day for the family drive, when a beam of red light cleanly penetrated the fog and created a six-inch circle on the road ahead. The beam shone on the road, pacing



ahead of them for several miles. The column of the beam then broke into several lengths which went into each other, collapsing and withdrawing upwards (rather like the design of old telescopes).

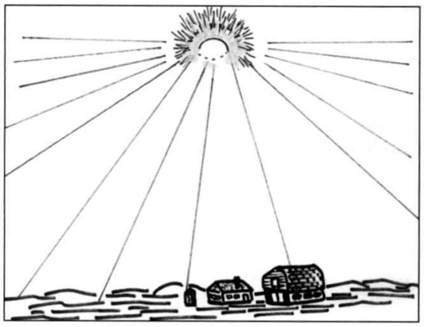
A dazzling white light then approached and stopped ahead. Very strong heat built up in the car, so the father stopped the vehicle. The headlights and radio failed, and the motor died. The four got out and moved toward the object (again, our brave witnesses), now appearing as a scallop-shaped craft, on landing legs, stretching across the road. It seemed metallic and had large windows.

The wife was the first to notice a "massive" face with big eyes staring at them. She screamed and everyone retreated back to the car. The father was near vomiting. The two boys, ages 15 and 19, got out again to investigate, and their father followed. (He didn't vomit this time). Two beings were apparently floating near the object—ugly, tall (7 foot), bald, and dressed in close-fitting khaki-brown outfits. So the witnesses fled again.

A burst of light occurred, a wave of great heat, and both the object and almost all the fog were gone. The car started and they went on their way. Afterwards, all four suffered from an itching for the next 10 hours.

So, with all this automobile tomfoolery, maybe we should return to 1957, North America's year of introduction to this strangeness. But, instead of Levelland and Stokes, let's keep our feet on the ground, and out of cars, this time.

November 6, 1957. Merom, Indiana. Night. The peak of that year's UFO wave. A 33-year-old ironworker, living on a small rural farm, was "outside" (you'll see why the quotes if you keep reading) when he encountered a very brilliant object, radiating a strong, red light. The whole farm and surrounding area were bathed in it. This went on for maybe 10 minutes, when a small object joined the larger, the light grew even more intense, and the two objects flew away. No one but the witness was outside, but several others verified the intense bright light.



The next day the man had "sunburn" in many places on his body. He went to his doctor a day later. Two days after that he was in the hospital. Hospital workers wouldn't talk about his case to curious news reporters or others. Imagination entered, and rumor had it that the military had kept everything incommunicado. In about a week he was able to go home.

Asked later about his injuries, the fellow said that it was true that he had been requested not to talk about them in detail. Frank Edwards, with his penchant for telling the story better than he heard it, basically made up a bunch of things about the case, including a bogus personal interview. Jim McDonald was put off by the witness due to some inexplicable "reservations about discussing this" (the injuries), and was told that "the Army" didn't want him to talk about "burns and rashes."

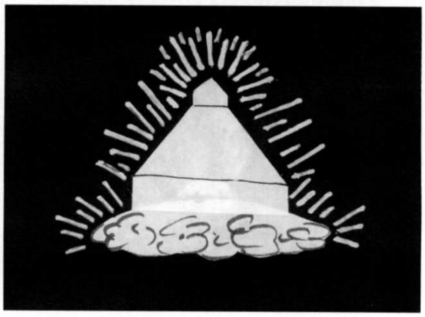
The truth of some of this is a bit more down-to-earth (very down-to-earth), and worth laying out. C. W. Fitch, a good and unsung field investigator, visited the family farm soon after the episode, was friendly, and became a known quantity to them, so he got the story. The Army had nothing to do with it; it was a mythical, but very useful, excuse to avoid some embarrassing discussions.

You see, our intrepid witness was out that evening because he was going to the john. In the isolation of the farm, he was sitting in the outhouse, with pants around his ankles and with the door open. When the red beam irradiated all exposed areas, it created "burns and rashes" on, well, all exposed areas. Our boy was understandably reluctant to engage in detailed accountings of the injuries to anyone but family and health professionals, and they respected that. When someone started the Army rumor, our good fellow grabbed it as the perfect out. And so the UFO story convolutedly goes.

Note, however, that for everyone but the MIB and the conspiracy buffs, the case remains perfectly intact: big bright object, super-intense light radiation, long-distance burns and rashes, medical assessment, and verification of the injuries.

November 10, 1957. Madison, Ohio. 1:25 a.m. Our next and last intrepid lady was up late on a wintry evening to check on the dogs and their kennel. The stove within was malfunctioning (greatly overheating) and she had to put out the fire. She then began laboriously moving the dogs inside the house, sat down, drank some tea, and worriedly watched the kennel, fearing that the fire might not, indeed, be dead.

She ultimately went back out to look it over. Then she noticed that it had become bright outside. She saw neither Moon, nor stars, nor clouds, nor even snow falling. But she *did* see a glowing domed disk hovering about 60 feet



high and near the rear of the kennel. The object was about 40 feet in diameter. From its bottom "puffy clouds" of smoke issued, and the whole thing was luminous.

Her eyes began to burn and she had to keep closing them. Finally, the whole business unnerved her and she ran to the house and locked the door. She felt neither cold nor warm while in the light. She did feel almost entranced for the 20 to 30 minutes she was outside.

Over the next few days she had rashes and her eyes hurt so badly that she had to go to a doctor. She craved sugar and water. If the symptoms were of radiation, though, they were mild, and fortunately they abated.

This case, the "Leita Kuhn case," was fairly well known back in the NICAP days. Unlike the other folks we've been reading about, Mrs. Kuhn became somewhat of an activist in the pursuit of UFOs, sticking resolutely to the details of her story and forthrightly defending their reality to anyone. As she said, "I am not a timid or hysterical woman. If I were, I would not be breeding Dobermans."

WHAT DO THESE CASES MEAN?

These cases I've recounted are fun in and of themselves. Do they tell us anything? Well, maybe. It's for each of us to decide in this slippery business. I'll tell you what they say to me, and maybe you'll find that valuable.

All these cases have a common feel about them of technology—big-league technology. The capabilities feel far beyond what we humans can do. The experiences feel like they are occurring right here, right now, in good old local space and time, and seem very physical. They do not (as do a percentage of the high strangeness cases) feel like they're the product of my ancestry's good old folk entities, or "passengers through the thin veil from faerie." (My files contain a few healthy handfuls of cases which do have this other feel to them, so John Keel fans can relax.)

But after that common foundation in physicality, the similarities slip away. When messing around with a car, do you want a ball, a domed disk, a cone, or an oval? Would you like a beam that narrows, a beam that spreads, a beam that collimates, or no beam at all? If you had two balls, how about one red, one blue? Should we stop your car by going right overhead or hover some distance away in a creek bed? What about the height? Do you prefer 30 feet or 1,000 feet? Heat? Or no heat? Every disk custom-made for an individualistic hot-rodder?

There is no good explanation for this diversity. I've heard good friends say, "Different ET cultures" or "Different functions for different craft." I'm sorry. That feels like utter baloney. The only explanation of this that seems authentic is that the experiences, in their details, are deliberate, aimed not at the individual witness, but at the cultural gestalt that all the witnesses share. Now what would be the use of such a program?

The witnesses in these cases had one effect in common: They all got very curious about what they were experiencing. A few other things came with that. They were certain that it was something beyond themselves and in some way was rather awesome and a bit scary (sometimes very scary). They were pretty sure that it was also well beyond humans and our own capacities. It was "other" and it was powerful. But we humans are a very resilient lot, and almost all of the witnesses basically went on with their lives, probably with a new imaginative spring in their step, and the idea that one shouldn't believe everything that the experts tell us.

But the effect on the witnesses' curiosities and belief in the reality of the UFO phenomenon had very little ostensible ripple in the big pond of the majority, expert culture. All these astounding drop-ins by the phenomenon come in and quietly die away. There are many reasons for this that could be discussed. One of them sits right before us in these cases: None of them are the same. There is no UFO *experience,* there are only UFO experiences. They are nonetheless real to the witnesses and to us fanatic students, but they are not real to the dominant culture.

But UFOs are not like meteorites, which scientists had finally to recognize. Meteorites are space rocks that intersect with Earth's orbit and go boom on the ground. With very minor differences, they do that in the same way every time. In other words, meteorites are essentially the same kind of thing. Sooner or later, science is forced to say that there's this phenomenon where rocks fall out of space and hit the ground. In comparison, scientists don't have to admit that there's a UFO thing, having a certain set of qualities, which makes cars stop and causes effects on people. There is too much diversity. When rocks become big ice chunks, science says "no" as far as meteorites are concerned—too different, doesn't fit the class of meteorite. What is the class of car-stoppers?

The diversity in UFO characteristics is not cultural, not technologically functional, and not the product of the equivalent of individual hot-rod drivers. It is deliberate and part of the agenda. It has no effect on the witness (to any significant degree) so long as the UFO remains fixating and awesome. So the desired effect of the variety is elsewhere—on those who hear all the one-by-one-by-one stories. It is the maintenance of a larger covertness while being as overt as you like. Why such a stance? Ah, I am not (yet) so foolish as to believe that I might have any useful insight on that one.

But one last presumption: Beam or no beam, red or blue, near or far, disk or cone—none of it is essential to stopping or meddling with a car, nor probably a person's physiology. It's all the outer veneer of the technology behind the curtains of the UFO stage. We, the audience, don't get to see the inner workings, nor anything close to them. If you were the magician controlling the performance, why would you let us see? ✦

ASSOCIATE APPLICATION FORM

Name ☐ Renewal

Street Address

City State Zip

ASSOCIATE LEVEL	GIFT	ASSOCIATE BENEFITS
Sustaining	$25.00	*International UFO Reporter (IUR)*
Contributing	$50.00	*IUR* plus one Center publication **
Donor	$100.00	*IUR* plus two Center publications** *or* one *Alien Abductions* video
Sponsor	$250.00	*IUR,* two publications & one Center case**
Research patron	$500.00	*IUR,* two publications & two Center cases**
Benefactor	$1000.00	*IUR* for life, two cases/year., and new CUFOS publications free**

Please Note: This application form is for U.S. residents only.

** Associates at the Contributing level or higher are entitled to select from the following publications according to the schedule of contributions above. Please check those you wish to receive as a benefit publication.

____ *Journal of UFO Studies, Volume 9* (Articles on abduction, angel hair, UFO photos, and UFO perception)
____ *Faded Giant:The 1967 Missile/UFO Incidents at Malstrom AFB* (Robert Salas and James Klotz) [UFO shuts down missiles]
____ *Grassroots UFOs: Cases from the Timmerman Files* (Michael Swords) [Hundreds of intriguing reports of all types]
____ *Delphos: A Close Encounter of the Second Kind* (Ted Phillips, 2002) [The definitive report on one of the most important U.S. physical trace cases]
____ *Roswell? YES!* [**Specify DVD or Tape--**A presentation by investigator Robert Durant on the best evidence for Roswell]
____ *Regional Encounters: The FC Files* (Francis Ridge) [CD-ROM, Windows; Comprehensive report on close encounters in the midwesterrn U.S. by a veteran investigator]
____ *Edge of Reality: Illinois UFO, Jan. 5, 2000* [**Specify DVD or Tape--**Documentary on the giant UFO seen by several witnesses, including policemen, near St. Louis]
____ *Captain Edward J. Ruppelt: Summer of the Saucers—1952* (Wendy Connors and Michael Hall, 2000) [Biography of Ruppelt, the most-respected head of the Air Force's Project Blue Book]
____ *Giant UFO in the Yukon Territory* (Martin Jasek, 2000) [Multi-witness sighting of a huge UFO; detailed investigation]
____ CUFOS UFO Archive II (A CD-ROM, Windows only, containing two out-of-print publications, including *Report on the UFO Wave of 1947* by Ted Bloecher and the *Kelly-Hopkinsville Report* by Isabel Davis and Ted Bloecher)
____ *Near Miss With a UFO: Swissair Flight 127* (Don Berliner and Robert Durant, 1999)
____ *CUFOS UFO Archive 1* (A CD-ROM, Windows only, containing three out-of-print UFO reports, including *UFO Reports Involving Vehicle Interference, Physical Traces,* and *1973 - Year of the Humanoids)*

My contribution to receive *IUR* and any benefit publications. . . . . $______________

Also enclosed is my personal tax-deductible contribution for the work of CUFOS. . . . . $______________

TOTAL ENCLOSED. . . . . . . $______________

(Please make payment in U.S. funds, payable to CUFOS.)

If you prefer to pay by credit card: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Card Number ______________________________ Expiration Date ______________

Signature ____

Mail this form to: CUFOS, 2457 W. Peterson Avenue, Chicago, IL 60659; 773-271-3611

(03/08)